The Unloved Wife

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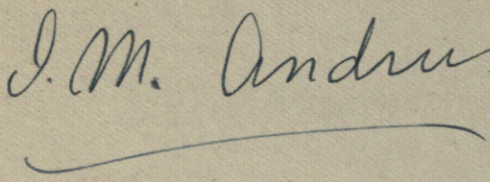
BY MRS. SOUTHWORTH



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THE UNLOVED WIFE

A NOVEL

By MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

Author of "Ishmael," "Self-Raised," "The Hidden Hand," "The Bride's Fate," "The Changed Bride," Etc.

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THE UNLOVED WIFE

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THE UNLOVED WIFE

CHAPTER I

THE SUDDEN SUMMONS

It was a splendid spectacle, that famous masquerade ball, which was given as the valedictory of the old and the salutatory of the new year, at the opening of one of the most brilliant seasons our national capital had ever seen.

A great war had ended.

A renowned military commander was at the head of our government, with a council selected from among the most eminent statesmen of the nation, and a diplomatic corps of the most distinguished ministers from foreign countries.

Certain illustrious personages of royal rank or lineage—a Brazilian emperor, a Russian grand duke, and a Bourbon prince—were among the transient and highly-honored guests of the city.

These, indeed, were but as blazing comets shooting swiftly across the social firmament, exciting admiration and disturbance rather than giving real pleasure and satisfaction.

Besides these, there were gathered at the capital the usual winter multitude of noted politicians, financiers, authors, artists, beaux, beauties, leaders of fashion and queens of society.

These might be called the fixed stars of the period.

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Conspicuous among these bright lights of the world were two who—to carry out our figure of speech—might have been called the sun and the moon of that empyrean; but they were termed—the one the "lion," and the other the "belle" of the season.

They were a gentleman and a lady; both young, handsome, gifted and one wealthy.

The name of the first mentioned was Tudor Hereward. He was an accomplished scholar, an eloquent orator, a rising statesman, and although but twenty-seven years of age, he was already an able party leader in the national House of Representatives. In person he was tall, fair and stately, with severely perfect Grecian features that were scarcely lighted by the cool, steel-blue eyes, and only slightly shaded by the carefully-dressed light brown hair and trimly-cut mustache.

His dress—the stereotype suit of the hour—was always faultlessly neat, and even fastidiously dainty.

His manners were reticent, reserved, and very cold, except when he was warmed up in debate on the floor of the House of Representatives, when he would often seem to be transfigured, and inspired with a splendid and burning eloquence. Men predicted for him an illustrious future. He was now, as has been said, the "lion" of the season.

The "belle" of the winter was Leda Von Kirschberg, the only child and heiress of Jacob Von Kirschberg, head of the great banking house of that name.

She was a beautiful, stately blonde, with a brilliantly blooming complexion, sparkling, purplish blue eyes, a small aquiline nose, pouting ruby lips, and shining, rippling auburn hair.

Her dresses were the happiest "inspirations" of Worth and of Pingen, and the envy and despair of her rivals. Her manners were at once dignified and gracious.

So much for the social status and personal appearance of the "lion" and the "belle" of that resplendent scene and season.

To say that nearly all the young ladies were more or less infatuated with the "lion," and that quite all the young men were much more than less madly in love with the "belle," would be but a faint statement of the situation.

And that these two pagan idols were sublimely indifferent to their many idolators, and were utterly devoted to each other, was too humiliatingly apparent to all to be questioned by any.

But ah! for "the cause of true love"—if indeed their mutual hallucination could be so called—there was an insurmountable obstacle in the way of its happy termination in marriage.

The belle of the season was a betrothed maiden!

The fact was not generally known, for it had not been ostentatiously announced in the society column of the newspapers, but Miss Von Kirschberg was really engaged to be married to Mr. Nicholas Bruyin, a millionaire, much richer and very much older than her own father.

So you see!

The ancient bridegroom-expectant had not come with the widowed father and motherless daughter to Washington, so that few in the city knew of the great man's existence, and none knew of his relations to the beauty and heiress.

Least of all did Tudor Hereward, her devoted knight, suspect the truth. For if he had done so, be sure that his fine sense of honor would have forbidden him to trespass on the sacred rights of the betrothed lover by too marked attentions to the betrothed maiden.

No! Tudor Hereward was ignorant in seeking and

innocent in winning the impassioned heart of Leda Von Kirschberg.

Why she had concealed the fact of her marriage engagement, and why she had encouraged and even invited the exclusive attentions of Mr. Hereward, is, perhaps, not difficult to understand.

In the first instance it was probably nothing more than vanity prompted her to seek to attract and monopolize the attentions of the most brilliant society man at the capital. Possibly she meant no harm at all, and had no ultimate object in view. But she who plays at "flirting" plays with fire.

Before she was well aware of the truth, she had not only captivated the fancy and imagination of the famous young statesman, but she had irrevocably lost to him her own vanity-full heart!

But that she had no intention of giving him her hand was soon quite apparent.

The night of the last day in the old year, the night of the masquerade ball, given by Senator S., in his splendid new mansion in the northwest quarter of the city, was destined to decide their fate.

Miss Von Kirschberg and Mr. Tudor Hereward were, of course, among the invited guests.

He took no character. It would not have been in harmony with his proud, fastidious nature to play any part, or, at least, any conspicuous part in such a harlequinade.

He merely covered his usual evening dress with an inscrutable black domino of fine cashmere, and his handsome face with a black mask of fine velvet.

She—by some subtle sympathy divining his thoughts and intentions on the subject—also eschewed the queens, gipsies, peasants, nuns, and nights and mornings, into which the ladies would try to transform themselves for one evening only, and over her

dress she wore a white silk domino, and over her fair face a white mask of satin and lace.

Neither had received any intimation of the other's disguise, yet the same subtle sympathy which had directed their costume for the evening brought them together through the immense crowd of maskers that filled all the reception-rooms, dancing-rooms, supper-rooms and conservatories, and overflowed into the halls, balconies, piazzas, and even into the glass-roofed winter garden on the grounds.

Through all of these a kaleidoscopic panorama was perpetually passing.

Kings, peasants, popes, brigands, angels, bayaderes, nuns, sultanas, judges, bandits, chimney sweeps, flower girls, beggars, heathen gods and goddesses, nights and days, and many other antagonisms, jostled each other.

Truly Democratic, Republican and Communistic conventions are rolled into one in your large masquerade ball, which is also chaotic, anarchic, and anachronistic, since it jumbles together all parts of the world, all dates of history, and all ranks of people.

Dazzling light and deafening music were streaming through every window of the crowded mansion when the black domino passed out of the conservatory, entered the winter garden, and looked about him.

Here were no lighted lamps, for the moonshine pouring in through the glass roof flooded the wonderful, beautiful scene with a soft bright radiance.

The black domino stood peering down the lovely walks, bordered with evergreens and hardy roses in full bloom. His eyes were searching for the "swan," as he mentally called a lovely, white form whom he had been watching all the evening, and whom he had seen glide through the crowded room out of the house, and in the direction of the winter garden.

He had followed her slowly and with difficulty, for

he could not slip through a "jam" as easily as she had done.

Now, in this freer space and purer air, he hoped to find her.

But she was nowhere to be seen. There seemed to be no one in the garden.

Nevertheless, he walked down between the hedges of blooming roses until he saw, in a corner of the rear hedge, an arbor of climbing roses, in the midst of which his eyes caught a gleam of silvery raiment.

He hastened directly to the spot, and found her there.

She was reclining on the rustic seat, and had taken off her mask for air, revealing the fair, proud face of Leda Von Kirschberg.

He had not expected this revelation of her identity, and he felt that his presence at this moment might be considered an inexcusable intrusion upon the privacy of the lady.

"Leda," he said, deprecatingly, as he stood before her and removed his own mask, "please to pardon my indiscretion, but I have been trying to make an opportunity for speaking with you all the evening—in fact, all the day—but have not succeeded even in seeing you until to-night."

"Tudor, sit down here for a little while. The rooms were so warm and the crowds so dense that I felt like suffocating, so I came out here to unmask and inhale a breath of fresh air," she said, as she smilingly made room for him beside her.

"I am very glad you did so! I presumed to follow you. Do you forgive me for my presumption?" he inquired, as he bowed and took the offered seat.

"That depends," she answered, archly. "How could you know me to follow me? Or were you, perhaps, following an unknown white domino that had caught your flitting fancy?"

"How could I know you?" he repeated, gravely, taking her hand and fixing his eyes on her lovely face—How could I know you? By the same simple, universal law of nature through which I know myself—for you are my sweeter, purer, higher self! Leda, my queen, do you imagine that any disguise could hide you from my knowledge? My heart would always recognize you, Leda!"

"Oh, Mr. Hereward!" she murmured, in a low, distressed tone, whose meaning he could not have perceived, for he went on to plead:

"I have been seeking you for many hours, my love, my queen! Not to tell you in set speech that which my whole life in your dear presence has been telling you ever since we first met, and in that meeting recognized each other! Ah, lady mine! Ever since that sacred moment of meeting and mutual recognition, I have been tempted to believe in the old heathen myth, that man and woman were originally one being; but that Jove, in a rage, cleft them in two, leaving the halves to seek each other sorrowing through all the ages! To seek in vain—as we see by all the mismatched couples in this lower world—except in such happy cases as ours; for, sweet lady, I have found my completion in you and you yours in me. And we know it now!"

"Oh, Mr. Hereward!" she moaned, in an almost inaudible tone.

"Thus, dear Leda, I have not followed you here to tell you that which you feel and know so well, but only to ask your permission to speak at once to your good father and invoke his blessing on our betrothal. But even this I scarcely need to mention—for surely I know I have your sanction for it."

"Oh, Mr. Hereward! Pray, pray do not talk to me in this manner!" she moaned, in agitation, as she with-

drew her hand from his fond clasp and covered her white face.

He gazed on her in surprise and uneasiness, yet scarcely taking in the full meaning of her words.

But why? Why may I not speak to you in this way? Why, Leda? Why?" he inquired, trying to take her hand again.

She drew it away as she faltered:

"Oh, Mr. Hereward! Because—because we are only friends! And we can never be more to each other than friends! Though I hope," she added, pleadingly, "that we may always be just such dear friends as we are and have been! Shall we not?" she prayed, dropping her hands and raising her eyes appealingly to his stern, set look.

He met her glance, he gazed on her white cheeks and trembling form, fixedly, incisively, with incredulous amazement and indignation in every feature of his firm, handsome face, for no part of her previous demeanor towards him had prepared his mind for this unexpected repulse.

"Miss Von Kirschberg, how is this? It cannot be that I hear you aright!" he said.

"Ah, yes, you do, Mr. Hereward! You hear me aright," she sighed.

"And we can be no more than friends?" he said, drawing in a hard breath. "Is this true?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Hereward! It is true! And it is heart-breaking!" she moaned, in a voice full of tears.

"Leda! In the name of Heaven! what do you mean? Explain yourself, I implore you!" he prayed, in an agony of sorrow, anxiety and confusion.

"I mean—I mean—oh, Tudor! My heart is broken!" And she dropped her head on her bosom and again covered her face with her hands.

"Leda! Leda!" he cried, with anguish.

"Oh, Tudor! Our friendship has been so precious,

so delightful to me! And—and—all our communion has been so improving, purifying, elevating to my soul. I am so much less vain, selfish and frivolous than when you first met me, the spoiled child of fortune. Our precious, delightful friendship has saved and redeemed me! And—and—I pray that I may enjoy it forever. But—but—it must be only friendship," she said, while heavy, sobbing sighs shook her bosom, and streams of tears forced themselves through the slender fingers that covered her face.

"Leda!" he exclaimed, in bitter pain, "you knew my love, my hopes, my aspirations! And you led me on and on to the brink of this humiliating overthrow. Ah! how cruelly and bitterly you have deceived me!"

"Oh, do not reproach me! Do not break a bruised and aching heart! If I have deceived you it was because I had first deceived myself. What knew I of my own untried nature? Nothing, or next to nothing, when we first met!"

"Leda! Leda!"

"Let me speak! You have charged me and you must hear me!"

"Speak, then! Defend your conduct if you can do it!"

"We met by chance in general society. We did not seek to meet. We knew nothing of each other until fate brought us together. Then we were mutually pleased. Oh, how natural! Our tastes, sympathies, opinions, were in harmony. We seemed to belong to each other. We became better friends, more intimate companions. It was inevitable."

"And deplorable," muttered Hereward, between his set teeth.

She continued:

"I found your society so precious, improving, delightful! I saw no harm, no danger or disappointment in the enjoyment of it. And so—and so—I drifted—

drifted into caring more for you than I had any legal or moral right to do! Ah, do not blame me for deceiving you, my friend! I first so fatally deceived myself!" pleaded the lady, in heart-broken tones.

"I do not wish to blame you, and I will not do so—if I can help it! But, Leda, in the name of Heaven, what do you mean by saying that you have no legal or moral right to care for me?"

"As I do and as I must care, for I cannot change my heart, though I can govern my conduct."

"But you do not answer me."

"Oh, Tudor! Tudor! How shall I tell you that—that—before I came down here—I was—was betrothed to Mr. Nicholas Bruyin," she faltered, in an almost expiring voice, as she raised her arm and hid her face behind the wide flowing sleeve of her domino, as if shrinking from the eyes of her lover.

"Mr. Nicholas Bruyin? Son or grandson of the great financier, I suppose," he said, in a low, cold, hard tone.

"The 'great financier,' as you call him, himself. He has no son or grandson. He is a bachelor," she explained, in a steadier voice, for now that she had told the worst, she was beginning to recover her self-command.

"The great financier himself!" exclaimed Tudor Hereward, with a bitter laugh.

"Yes," sighed Leda.

"Why, he must be at least seventy years of age!"

"He is seventy-one."

"Quite old enough to be your grandfather."

"Quite old enough."

"And this, then, is your lover, Miss Von Kirschberg!" he said, in bitter irony.

"My betrothed husband," amended the young lady.

Tudor Hereward broke into another harsh laugh.

Leda Von Kirschberg bowed her head in humiliation.

"And no disparity of age, no uncongeniality of habits, no incompatibility of mind should have been cause sufficient to prevent the thought of such unnatural and degrading betrothal!" he said, in stern condemnation.

"No," she answered, sorrowfully. "No, and now it is too late to remedy the evil. For with us children of the Fatherland betrothal is held scarcely less sacred and binding than marriage itself. So, you know, I am compelled to marry the aged man."

"Good-bye, Miss Von Kirschberg," he said, coldly, as he arose to leave the arbor.

"Oh, Tudor!" she pleaded, clasping her hands and raising her eyes to his face. "Do not go away in anger! Do not condemn me utterly! Listen to me! Hear my defence yet farther! When I was betrothed to Mr. Bruyin I was but a child, ignorant of myself, despite my twenty years. He was my father's dearest friend and our most frequent visitor, and—"

"The richest as well as the oldest and ugliest man of your acquaintance," sneered Tudor Hereward.

"He was kinder to me than any one else in the world except my dear father," she continued, disregarding his sarcasm, or seeming to do so, "and I was grateful to the old gentleman, and was even fond of him, as children are fond of an old uncle, or a grandfather. And so to please him and my father I consented to become his wife. How should I have known any better?"

"Will you permit me to say good-evening to you now, Miss Von Kirschberg?" he demanded, icily.

"No; for it is not my fault that we part at all! And not my wish that we part in this way! Oh! Tudor, have some consideration for me! I have given you all that I could give. More, indeed, than I had any

sort of right to give. I have given you all my society since I have been here—all my friendship since we first met. Oh! my friend, do not part in malice from me! Do not quite abandon me! Do not, after lifting me somewhat above self and the world, do not leave me to sink again into their perdition! Though we may be no more than friends, still let us be friends. Oh, Tudor! shall we not be friends as we have been?"

She was wringing her white hands together, and pouring her whole soul through the violet splendor of her eyes that were raised tearfully, prayerfully to his.

He was standing before her, regarding her firmly, sternly.

"No, Miss Von Kirschberg," he answered, coldly, "we can not be friends, such as we have been! There is a plain piece of folk-lore among the country people of my old home to the effect that—'Friendship sometimes turns to love, but love to friendship—never!' I believe the proverb to be true. As for me, I am too much in earnest for such trifling. I cannot be merely the friend of the woman to whom I have given my whole heart. I must be her husband, or a stranger to her! Her husband, or nothing to her!"

"Ah, Heaven! Ah, Heaven!" moaned the lady, pale with sorrow. "Even the friendship that could be no sin—even the friendship that might be my salvation is denied me! Oh, why should this be?"

"Because, Miss Von Kirschberg," he answered, relentlessly, "I do not belong to this new school of sentiment and philosophy! I am a plain countryman, an old-fashioned Christian, one who holds the marriage bond to be a very sacred thing, and believes that the wife has no right to cultivate a sentimental friendship with any man except her husband, for that such a deviation from her allegiance would be both sinful and dangerous."

"Oh! would to Heaven!" she cried, clasping her

hands in the earnestness of her aspiration, "would to Heaven I might have been your—"

"Hush, Miss Von Kirschberg! Do not finish that sentence! It is better left incomplete!" he said, in his stern integrity.

"I was only about to add that if I had had the complete happiness of being your wife, I should not then have needed the friendship of any other human being! I should have been perfectly satisfied with your love alone!" And she ended with a sobbing sigh.

"Then you had better not have said it! I am sorry that you have. Again—good-bye, Miss Von Kirschberg! I hope you may be happy."

And he turned to leave her.

"Stay! Oh, stay!" she implored, laying her white hand on the sleeve of his domino.

"What can I do for you, Miss Von Kirschberg?" he coldly inquired.

"Promise me that you will not let any memory of me mar your life—"

He looked at her curiously, but did not speak.

"Promise me," she continued, "that you will some time marry and forget me!"

If this speech was a ruse to get at his present thoughts and feelings, it was a vain one. If she expected to hear him protest that though he left her and repudiated her friendship, yet he should never be able to forget her, and certainly since he could not marry her he should never marry any one—if she expected to hear him say this, she was much mistaken and deeply disappointed, for he laughed lightly and answered:

"No! I shall cherish no morbid memories to mar the life for which I am responsible to the Lord. I shall probably, in time, marry some true-hearted young woman, whom I shall endeavor to make contented. Yes, I shall marry, if only to raise another bar be-

tween myself and this my first romance, and, I hope, my last folly, upon which I now turn my back forever! Once more, good-night, Miss Von Kirschberg," said Tudor Hereward, as he walked away.

His mind was full of conflicting emotions—of wrath and pity—for the bowed and wretched woman he had left behind, and whose heart, when divided between love and lucre, had given her deliberate choice to lucre.

He went on through the winter garden, towards the illuminated house, from which music still pealed, and through which crowds of gayly and fantastically-dressed people still passed.

He entered through the conservatory, and then, without waiting for the supper, at which the guests were expected to unmask, without even taking leave of his host or hostess—for not knowing what characters they had assumed or where to find them, he could not have done so—he left the house and bent his steps towards his hotel.

It was yet so early that the hotel was still open.

As he passed in through the office the clerk called to him.

"A telegram waiting for you here, sir."

Tudor Hereward reached his hand for the message without the slightest misgiving. He was in the habit of receiving telegrams, generally on political affairs.

He tore open the envelope of this one, and took it to the gaslight over the clerk's desk and read as follows:

CLOUD CLIFFS, W. Va., 9 P. M., Dec. 31st, 18—.

TO THE HON. TUDOR HEREWARD, —— Hotel, Washington City. Your father is very ill. He begs you to come home at once. LILITH WYVIL.

Tudor Hereward stood very pale and still while his eyes were riveted on the lines before him.

Then with a start he rallied himself and went to the desk and wrote the following answer:

WASHINGTON CITY, 11.30 P. M., Dec. 31st, 18—.
MISS LILITH WYVIL, Cloud Cliffs, Frosthill, W. Va.
Yours just received. Will leave for home by 12 M. train. TUDOR HEREWARD.

He dispatched this by the messenger boy, ordered a carriage to be at the door in fifteen minutes, and hurried to his room to pack his valise.

And in less than half an hour afterwards Tudor Hereward was seated in a Pullman parlor car on the midnight express train of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, flying onwards towards his patrimonial home in the mountain regions of West Virginia, whither we must precede him.

CHAPTER II

LILITH

IT was a very handsome chamber, notwithstanding that the furniture was somewhat old-fashioned, worn and faded.

Purple damask curtains draped the four tall windows—two on the east front, and two on the south side. Purple draperies canopied the rosewood bedstead, and covered the cushions of the chairs and sofa.

Turkey rugs lay on the polished yellow pine floor wherever they were most useful—before the dressing bureau that stood between the two front windows on the east; before the sofa that sat below the side windows on the south; before the fireplace, in which a fine

hickory wood fire burned, on the west; and on each side of the bedstead, that stood with its head to the north.

And on the bed lay a very handsome man, in the prime of life, though the mortal pallor of his face showed that he was smitten unto death; a man who at first sight might have been taken for Tudor Hereward, so strong was the resemblance between the two.

And Tudor Hereward he was in fact—Tudor Hereward, Senior.

He was sleeping now, and his face was shaded from the fire-light by a tall purple screen that stood between his bedstead and the fireplace.

Before the fire, in a deep easy chair, reclined a young girl, robed in a white wrapper.

Her lovely face and form, with the glow of the fire-light upon it, and with the background of the purple-draped chair, throwing out in relief the graceful white-robed figure, made a very beautiful picture.

Her hands were clasped in her lap; her head was bowed on her bosom; her eyelids drooped over the dark eyes until their long, thick lashes lay like shadows on the oval, white cheeks. Her jet black hair, escaped from its fastenings, rippled down in long tresses upon her shoulders and bosom.

She seemed to be sleeping, but she was not so, for the faintest stir or sigh from the man on the bed instantly aroused her.

Everything in the room was motionless, except the flickering flames on the hearth that sent up weird, dancing lights and shadows on the whitewashed wall and purple-draped windows. And all was so silent that the ticking of a watch on the distant dressing-table could be distinctly heard.

"Lilith."

The voice that came from the weak man on the bed

was so faint that none but the most attentive ear could have heard it.

"Lilith."

"Yes, father," she answered, softly, as she arose and glided noiselessly to his bedside, and took his pallid hand in hers.

"Have I slept long, darling?"

"Since seven o'clock. It has been a refreshing sleep, I hope. You feel better?"

"A little. What o'clock is it, dearest?"

"It is after five. It will soon be light now. I wish you a Happy New Year, father," she said, but her voice faltered as she thought of what the New Year might bring to them.

"Yes, love; a Happy New Year for us both,

'Whichever side the grave for me
The morning light shall break,' "

he answered, gravely and sweetly.

Lilith stooped and pressed her lips to his pallid brow. She could scarcely keep back her tears.

"You sent the telegram to Tudor?"

"Yes, father. I started Alick with it to Frosthill."

"Has any answer come?"

"Yes, father. I told Alick to wait at the office until it came, and then to hurry home with it. Mr. Hereward left by the midnight express from Washington, and will be here this forenoon. I have already sent Stephen in the gig to meet him at the station."

"He will be here in a few hours, then. Is everything prepared for his arrival? His room aired? A fire kindled in it? and— But of course, of course; for you never forget nor neglect anything, darling, least of all Tudor's comfort, or mine. Give me your hand, Lilith, sweetest heart that ever was!" he said, clasping the little white hand that she laid in his.

"Will you take something now, father? I have some fresh port wine whey ready."

"Yes, dear," he answered, faintly, for he was already fatigued with this brief talk.

She went and took up a covered china pitcher from the hearth, poured some of its contents into a glass, and brought it to him. She slipped one hand under his pillow to raise his head a little while she gave the refreshment.

After he had taken sufficient she put away the glass out of sight, brought fresh water scented with lavender, sponged off his face and hands, changed his pillows, and laid him comfortably to rest.

Then she moved noiselessly about the room, putting everything in order.

Finally she resumed her seat in the easy chair before the fire.

Her patient lay perfectly quiet, and she thought that he slept again. But he had not composed himself to the rest she had hoped for him.

"Come sit by me a little while, Lilith, my darling," he said.

She arose, and went and sat on the side of his bed.

"Give me your hand, my precious," he said. And he closely clasped the hand she placed in his, and pressed it to his face.

"My sweet child! My dear, good, faithful daughter! What should I have done without you? I pray our Lord to bless you, my Lilith," he whispered.

"Dearest, best father in this world, our Lord has blessed me through you. How much do I not owe you? How would my seventeen years of life have passed but for you? My infancy in some almshouse; my childhood and youth in some hard taskmaster's shop or task-mistress' kitchen. This must have been my fate but for you, who rescued me from it, and gave me a father's love, a happy home, and a good education.

All and every blessing that I enjoy in this world, under the Divine Providence, I owe to you," warmly responded the girl.

"Hush, Lilith! Hush, my darling! Forget all that. You are my beloved child."

"By charitable adoption," murmured the girl.

"No; but by the most sacred claim that a child could have upon a man, not even except that of birthright. And even if this had not been true—if this had been otherwise, and instead of the most sacred claim you had upon my love and care, you had had none whatever—still, Lilith, still, my dearest, you have been so much to me—a loving child, a tender nurse, a guardian angel!"

"Do not say so of me, dear father—of such a poor one as I am."

"It is no impiety and no exaggeration to say that, my darling, for the greatest blessing of my life you are and have always been, my precious one."

"Your praises humble me, father, because I feel so unworthy of them."

"Why so, in the name of truth?"

"I think of my many shortcomings—my failures. But do not talk any more now, dear. I can see that it tires you to do so. Try to rest again."

"Ah, Lilith! there will be time enough to rest—afterwards. It is near seven o'clock, is it not?"

"Within ten minutes," she replied, after looking at her watch.

"And Tudor will be here in three hours."

"Yes, I think so. I told Stephen to put the best horse in the gig when he went to the station to meet him."

"I shall not sleep until he comes. I feel so anxious to see him. I have so much to say to him."

"Shall I open the shutters now, dear father? Or would you rather they should remain closed?"

"Oh, open them, by all means, love! I should like to see the sun rise once more."

"Many times more, dearest father! And this is the New Year's sun, you know," said Lilith, trying to command her voice and to speak cheerfully.

"The New Year's sun! So we must greet it."

Lilith arose and opened the east windows—which were on the side of his bed, whose head was to the north—and let in the first faint light of the winter day that was dawning redly above the cloud-capped, snow-covered cliffs that shut in this little valley, and tinging its mists with a roseate hue.

Then she extinguished the night light, replenishing the fire, and resumed her seat by the bed.

The patient had turned his face to the east and was gazing out upon the brightening dawn.

But when the little figure sat down beside him, he turned his eyes upon her and inquired:

"Lilith, dear, have you slept during the night?"

"Oh, yes, father!" cheerfully answered the girl.

"How and where, I would like to know," he demanded incredulously.

"Oh—I—I slept very comfortably, in the easy chair before the fire," she answered, hesitatingly.

"And you started up wide awake and came to look at me every time I stirred in my sleep! I know you did just as well as if I had seen and heard you! Oh, yes, my dear, I know just how comfortably you slept last night in that arm-chair before the fire!" he added, in a dissatisfied tone.

"I do not feel tired this morning, dear father, indeed I do not."

"Lilith, I wish you would go to your room and lie down, and send Nancy to me."

"Dear father, Tudor will soon be here, and when he comes I will give up my watch to your son, but to no one except him."

"Ah, Lilith, my faithful daughter!" he murmured, with a sigh. "If your future were but assured—"

"Dear father, it is assured, being, like all our future, in the hands of the Divine Providence! You know that, since you it was who taught me the faith!"

"Ah, yes! But in times of weakness and danger and uncertainty, we are so apt to fall from the faith. The Apostle Paul feared that while he preached to others he might be himself a castaway. Shakespeare's heroine confessed that she could teach twenty what were good to be done, rather than be one of the twenty to follow her own teaching."

"Dear father, are you not talking too much? Had you not better rest?"

"I cannot rest, dear. I am thinking of you. Ah! if I had lived longer—if I could have lived to be an old man, I should have made or saved a fortune for you, Lilith. But now I have nothing to leave you, my child, because I have nothing—nothing of my own. I have only a life interest in this estate, which came with my late wife, Tudor's mother, and goes to him entire at my death. I have no power even to leave you a home, my poor little daughter," he added, with a deep sigh.

"Dearest dear," she murmured, laying her fresh cheek against the wasted one of the sinking man, "do not be troubled concerning me. I am not a bit troubled about myself. I have no fears for the future —none!"

"No! Children have no fears for the future because they have no knowledge of the world. They have, indeed, an unconscious faith. Ah, well! The Highest has declared that 'Unless ye become as little children ye shall not see the Kingdom of God.' And that is evident, since anxious care, no more than envy, hatred or malice, or any other form of selfishness, can never see the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Dearest father, you are fast exhausting yourself. Try to get a little rest before your son arrives."

"I cannot. I am thinking of you, I say. Lilith! there is only one way in which I could leave you in perfect peace! Do you know what way that would be?"

"No, dear; but do not be troubled. I am not."

"No, of course not. Children never are, as I said before. Lilith! listen to me, my darling. I could depart in peace if I could leave you—THE WIFE OF MY SON."

Lilith started suddenly and blushed over face, neck and bosom.

He was watching her anxiously; he saw her emotion, and gave it an interpretation favorable to his wishes. He continued, at the risk of exhausting his little remaining strength:

"I believe that Tudor loves you and will ask you to marry him without delay, so as to give him the legal and moral right to protect you when I shall have passed away, and, oh, my dear child, I hope and pray that your answer may be such as to give him happiness and me peace."

Lilith could not speak. She dropped her head upon her bosom and covered her face with her trembling hands; but the vivid blush that had deepened over face, neck and bosom proved a sufficient answer.

"Being Tudor's father, I might be thought too partial a judge; for I think him one of the most excellent men of the earth—pure, true, wise, good and brave. Even if he were not my own son, yet knowing him as I do know him, of all the men in the world, I should prefer him to be the husband of my darling girl."

"But, oh, sir, I am not worthy—I am not suitable in any way to be your son's wife," faltered the young girl, in an almost inaudible voice, while she was paling, flushing and trembling with uncontrollable agitation.

"Not worthy, Lilith! You not worthy!" he muttered, gazing steadily at her trembling frame.

"Oh, no! no! no! I was but a poor laboring man's child, and but for your charity I should now be a pauper or a servant. Your son comes of one of the oldest and proudest families in the country, descended through you from the most ancient Saxon nobles, and through his mother from an even prouder race, a royal one—the old English kings. And he has all the hereditary pride of his race. It would not be fitting—he would not think it fitting—that he should marry a laborer's daughter."

"Hush, Lilith! Hush! You distress me, child. You are my daughter. I have adopted and brought you up. For years it has been my dearest wish that you should become the wife of my son, who loves and esteems you as you deserve. You are of all women in the world the most worthy of him, as he of all men in the world is the most deserving of you. You seem to have been 'made for each other,' as the country people say. To be sure, my darling, you are 'over young to marry yet,' nor should I wish you to wed for three or four years to come were I not about to leave you unprotected in the world. And so, my beloved child, before I depart I must see you the happy wife of my good son."

He looked at her wistfully as he spoke, and at that moment the first rays of the rising sun streamed through the clouds that capped the cliffs, glanced through the east window, and illumined the bowed head and white-robed form of the girl.

"It is a good omen. All is well," murmured Tudor Hereward, as he turned over and dropped into the sudden, swoon-like sleep of the dying.

After a few minutes Lilith arose softly and bent over him.

"Thank dear Heaven, he sleeps well. And he must

not be awakened even for his son," she murmured to herself, as she noiselessly crossed the room and let down the purple curtains, to temper the bright sunshine.

"His son's wife!" she murmured softly to herself, while a flitting blush played over her lovely face. "His son's wife—Tudor's wife! Oh, my dear father! to wish such happiness for me! A happiness I dare not dream of—no, no, indeed I dare not dream of," she added, hastily, fearfully, as she pushed the black curls away from her forehead, and, as if to banish dangerous thought by action, she crossed the room and entered a little dressing-closet, in which sat a tall, thin, black woman of about forty years of age, clothed in a gown of black and white striped calico that made her seem even taller and thinner than she was, and in a white turban, a small white shawl, and white apron.

She laid down the coarse gray yarn stocking that she had been knitting, and arose to meet her young mistress.

"Nancy," said the latter, "I want you to find Alick and tell him to see that the fire is kept up in the young master's room, and everything is ready for him there. After that tell him to go down to the outer gate and wait for the carriage from the station, and to stop it there, lest the sound of the wheels coming to the house should awaken the master, who is sleeping quietly at present and must not be disturbed on any account. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Miss Lilith."

"And tell Cassy to have breakfast ready for the young master at a quarter past ten o'clock. He will want a substantial meal after his long night ride."

"Yes, Miss Lilith."

"And you, Nancy, after you have delivered your messages, return to this room and keep a lookout for

Mr. Tudor Hereward's arrival, meet him yourself and take him up to his room, and tell him that I will notify him as soon as his father wakes, but that Major Hereward must not be disturbed until then."

"Yes, Miss Lilith, I'll 'tend to eberyting. Don't you be anxious nor likewise 'sturbed in your mind. And now, honey, you ought to get your breakfas' an' go right to bed. I know as you ain't tuk a wink o' sleep since ole marse been sick."

"Oh, yes, I have, Nancy."

"Oh, sho! Wot's shettin' up yer eyes in a arm-chair 'fo' de fire? Dey's wide open de minute ole marse stirs! I knows! Now you g'long and get some breakfas' and go to sleep. An' arter I done my messidges I'll come and sit here an' watch ole marse wid one eye, an' listen fo' young marse wid t'oder. Now, g'long an' do's I tell yer, honey."

"I will, when Mr. Tudor Hereward arrives. Not until then. I will not give up my post to anyone but him. But I thank you all the same, Nancy," gently answered Lilith, as she softly closed the door and resumed her seat beside the sinking man.

She looked at him and saw that he was sleeping heavily. His talk to her had greatly fatigued him, and he slept the sleep of exhaustion.

He slept long and deeply, while she sat watching his ebbing life, thinking sorrowfully of the beloved and revered friend, the much more than fond father, who was so soon to leave her, grieving for him, and yet—though, indeed,

"With a defeated joy"—

dreaming her young dream of love, dreaming so, because she could not but dream in the stillness and silence of the chamber.

So still and silent was it that her listening ears de-

tected the first faint sound of the carriage wheels as the vehicle drew up and stopped at the outer gate.

This she knew heralded the arrival of Tudor Hereward—Tudor Hereward, the hero of her childhood's reverence and of her womanhood's love! Tudor Hereward, destined within a very few hours to become her husband—if the father should be right in his happy hope.

CHAPTER III

"A MOMENT MORE AND THEY SHALL MEET"

LILITH listened for the coming step, but she did not hear it.

A little later on she heard a low tap at the chamber door, so low a tap that if her ears had not been so acutely attentive she could not have heard it at all. She knew who stood without—the one being on earth whom she loved more than all the world; who held in his hands her destiny; who, before the day was over, might be her husband.

She arose, trembling, flushing and paling, noiselessly crossed the room, and softly opened the door.

It was as her heart had divined.

Tudor Hereward, pale, anxious, weary, dusty, just as he had come off his long night ride, stood before her.

"Lilith! My father! How is he?" he demanded, in a low, hurried tone; and he waited her answer with suspended breath.

The young girl crossed the threshold into the hall, closed the door behind her, and replied, in a whisper:

"He is better just now. He is sleeping."

"What—what is the trouble now, Lilith?" he anxiously inquired.

"His old malady in an aggravated form," sadly replied the girl.

"When was he stricken again?"

"Yesterday afternoon. The doctor was sent for immediately, but he did not reach the house until evening. As soon as he had seen Major Hereward he came out and told me that the case was very serious —much more serious than it had ever been before. He asked where you were, and when I told him you were in Washington, where you had gone at the meeting of Congress, he said, of course, though he had forgotten you had to go, but that you must be summoned home at once. I then sent a telegram to you," Lilith explained, in a low, agitated voice; and even while she spoke, she kept her hand on the knob of the door, and often bent her ear to listen for the slightest sound from the sick-room.

"Has he suffered much?" sorrowfully inquired the son.

"Only just at first; but he rested quietly during the night, and took nourishment this morning. He is sleeping again."

"Lilith, my child, what is the matter with you? Your color comes and goes; your frame shivers as with a chill. Are you not well, dear?" he inquired, compassionately.

"Yes, I am well, thank you, Mr. Hereward," said the young girl, striving to compose the agitation that had attracted his attention. "And now, if you please, I must return to Major Hereward. I will inform you as soon as he awakes. You will find everything ready for you, and you will excuse me from attendance, I am sure."

"Yes, yes, dear child! Do not trouble yourself about me more than to have me called when my father wakes," replied Tudor Hereward, as he turned away.

"He always speaks to me as if I were still a little

child. I do not believe he knows that I have grown up. Oh, I am sure he will think I am too young for him, even if everything else were fitting. I wish I were five years older," mused Lilith, as she re-entered the sick room and resumed her watch at the bedside.

She looked at her patient, rejoicing in the fact that he slept so well; rejoicing in the hope that he would awaken from his sleep refreshed, and rally from this prostration, as he had rallied from so many others, with renewed health and strength, to go about his house and farm an apparently well man.

Certainly the family physician had given no reason for such high hope; but, then, even doctors were sometimes mistaken, she thought.

So she sat and watched her patient, hoping for his recovery, dreaming of his cherished desire that she should be the wife of his son, and wondering if such happiness could ever be in store for her.

Every time her patient stirred in sleep she would gently pass her hand to and fro over his brow without touching it, but with an intuitive mesmeric motion that soothed him into deeper slumber.

Thus the hours passed while he slept this profound sleep, angel-guarded.

Twice again Tudor Hereward came to the door and tapped so softly that none but Lilith's fine, attentive ears could have heard the sound.

Each time she arose and softly opened the door to tell him that his father still slept well, and that she would call him when Major Hereward should awake.

On the last occasion he took her hand, drew her away from the door into the hall, and whispered, earnestly:

"Lilith, I am told that you have had no breakf t, and furthermore that you have taken neither food nor rest since my father was stricken. This must not be

so, my child. Let me relieve your watch, while you go and take necessary food and sleep."

"When he wakes I will do so, Mr. Hereward. Not until then, please. I could not. And I do not need anything, really. I had some coffee during the night-watch. Let me go back to him now. As soon as he wakes I will be sure to inform you," she gently replied.

And the son retired, and the young nurse returned to her post by the bed.

It was late in the short winter afternoon when Major Hereward awoke, looking so much refreshed, strengthened and brightened that Lilith's heart was gladdened to behold him.

"Has Tudor come, my dear?" he anxiously inquired.

"Yes, father, some hours ago. And he has breakfasted and rested, and is waiting anxiously to see you. I am so glad and so thankful that he will see you looking so much better," said Lilith, as she hastened to the fireplace and brought a small bowl of beef tea to the bedside.

When he had taken this refreshment, and she had put away the empty bowl, he said:

"Send for Tudor to come to me, my dear."

Lilith went to the adjoining little room, in which Nancy sat sewing, and dispatched her with the message.

A very few minutes passed before Tudor Hereward entered the room. And as he did so Lilith glided silently from it.

He went directly up to his father's bedside, and bent over him with affectionate solicitude.

"I hope you are feeling refreshed by your long sleep, dear sir. The news of your sudden attack grieved me very much. I came on at once by the first train that left Washington after your telegram reached me. I arrived at half-past ten. And I am very grateful to

find you so very much better," he said, as he took and held his father's hand between both of his own.

"I am very glad that you have come, Tudor. I am very glad to see you, indeed, my dear son," replied the father, laying his other hand upon the young man's bent head.

"And you are really much better now, father?"

"Yes, I am better just at present, I thank Heaven, and the little guardian angel who has nursed me so tenderly and watched over me so faithfully. Where has she gone?" inquired Major Hereward, looking around.

"If you mean little Lilith, the child left the room as I entered," replied Tudor Hereward.

"That is well. I am glad she has withdrawn for a little space, not only because I wish her to have some relief from her long watch, but also because I wish to talk of her with you alone."

"To talk with me of Lilith?" carelessly inquired the young man, as he sank into the arm-chair at the head of the bed, as if preparing for the *tête-à-tête.*

"Yes, of my dear daughter, Lilith."

"What of the child, sir?"

"I am so very anxious about her."

"But why? What ails her? She looks pale and disturbed, certainly, but that is from loss of rest, no doubt."

"Tudor, you do not understand. It is for Lilith's future that I am so anxious. My dear son, you must know that this last attack of illness is the gravest I have ever suffered."

"That is the doctor's mistaken opinion, sir. You are really looking very well."

"However well I may be looking just at this moment, Tudor, I feel that my mortal pilgrimage draws to its close."

"I do hope and I believe that this is not so, sir."

"Never mind what you hope and believe, Tudor. Your hope and belief will not affect life and death. And feeling so sure as I do that my departure is very near at hand, I have become painfully anxious concerning the future of my dear daughter, Lilith."

"Lilith again! I do not admit the possibility that you are anywhere near death, sir; but even if such were the case—which Heaven forbid!—why should you be troubled about the child, my dear father?"

"Because I have nothing to leave her; because her future may be unprovided for and unprotected. That is the reason, Tudor. And reason enough, I should suppose."

"But, my dear sir, you cannot think otherwise than that I will both provide for and protect the child whom you have brought up and educated as your daughter? Pray give yourself no uneasiness, for even if you should be taken from us—which I do not believe likely to occur for many long and happy years to come—I should, of course, consider it to be my bounden duty to provide for and protect that child," earnestly responded the young man.

"Thank you, my good son. I knew, of course, that such would be your disposition," replied Major Hereward.

"Then why should you suffer a moment's disquietude about the child?"

"Because, Tudor, in the first place Lilith is not a child, but a young woman. She was seventeen her last birthday."

"Indeed! I had no idea she was so old! But what has her age to do with the question at issue?"

"Much—everything. Lilith is a young, beautiful woman, therefore there is but one way in which you can honorably protect her, and delicately provide for her."

"And what way is that, my dear father? I am ready to do anything you wish."

"You are the best son in the world, I do believe."

"I hope not. It would be a bad showing for the world if I were the best son in it. But tell me in what way I can properly take care of Lilith."

"By making her your wedded wife," solemnly replied Major Hereward.

Tudor Hereward started violently, flushed crimson, as at a blow or an insult, then fixed his strong, blue eyes searchingly upon the speaker's face, as if he seriously doubted his father's sanity.

"I—beg your pardon, sir; I—think I cannot have understood you," he said at length, in perfect good faith, for he really doubted his own ears.

"Cannot have understood me, Tudor? Why, I speak plain English enough. Understand me now, then; my son I wish you to marry Lilith Wyvil."

The young man stared more fixedly than ever. He seemed like one struck speechless.

"You are quite old enough to marry," continued Major Hereward, seemingly unconscious of his son's amazement. "You are seven years older than I was when I married your mother. And you should have married years ago had your destined bride reached a proper age. She is, indeed, still very young, but girls are married as young. Come, Tudor, you know what I wish. Make my Lilith a happy wife before I depart hence."

Some minutes passed in utter silence.

"You do not answer me, my son. Come, what do you say? Will you marry Lilith Wyvil?" anxiously questioned Major Hereward, after another long pause, as he turned a yearning, pleading gaze upon the troubled face of the young man.

"I am surprised and perplexed beyond all measure, sir, by this most extraordinary proposition. Of course,

I cannot marry Lilith Wyvil. I have never even thought of the girl except as a mere child—the child of your charity. As such, I should always think it my duty to care for her needs. But as to making her my wife!—the idea cannot be entertained for an instant. It is an absurdity—an impossibility! I beg your pardon, sir, but the girl is in no way fitted to become my wife. Still, I shall always look carefully to her best interests, as the child of my father's charity——"

"My charity!" burst forth the sick man, with a vehemence that must have imperilled his frail life. "For the Lord's sake, Tudor Hereward, let us have done at once and forever with that bragging lie!"

"My dear father!" exclaimed the amazed young man.

"Yes," continued Major Hereward, almost indignantly; "if there be any question of charity in our relations with this young girl, it certainly is not she who is the recipient of it; it is I, and it is you."

Tudor Hereward was more than ever inclined to fear that his father was becoming delirious. He longed to feel the patient's pulse; he wished the doctor might come.

"Do you hear me, Tudor? Do you hear me define our true relations with Lilith Wyvil?"

"I hear you, sir," replied the young man in a tone of painful perplexity. "I hear you, and I should think from your words that we had, in some way, defrauded this child out of her birthright, and that we were living off the revenues of her estate, or in some other manner benefiting by her loss."

"And you are very nearly right; for we have been the means of depriving Lilith of her birthright. We have been enjoying this estate and all else that we possess, as you will enjoy your inheritance, and not only your inheritance, but every good thing that you

possess, or ever will possess, in this world, and every success that you will achieve, every distinction that you will attain, every triumph that you conquer, you will enjoy at Lilith's expense, and at her great loss."

"Father, your discourse becomes so serious as to be alarming—though I really do not understand it! Pray explain. Tell me this—Has Lilith Wyvil any sort of claim upon this estate, which I have been always led to believe to have been in my mother's family for centuries, and to have come down in a direct line to her, and from her to us? If Lilith Wyvil has any legal right to this estate—though I cannot comprehend how it is possible that she should—in Heaven's name let her have it; let her have it unencumbered by a husband in my person! But has the girl such an unsuspected right?"

"No, no, of course not. You misinterpret my language. I told you we owe everything we enjoy to Lilith Wyvil, since we possess it at her expense, and through her great loss. And this is the sacred truth, as you will admit when you shall have heard all that I have to tell you. You owe Lilith Wyvil a debt so sacred that nothing but the gift of yourself can cancel it," said Major Hereward, speaking with deep solemnity.

"I confess that I despair of comprehending your meaning, sir!" said Tudor Hereward, with a hopeless sigh.

"Listen to me, then, and I will make all clear to you," replied the major.

CHAPTER IV

THE SACRED DEBT

"Do you remember, Tudor, the circumstances under which I first adopted Lilith Wyvil?" gravely inquired Major Hereward.

"Not perfectly; I remember, of course—for I was a boy ten years old at that time—the autumn when you brought Lilith home here, and represented her as the daughter of your dearest deceased friends," replied the young man.

"And so she was, the orphan child of parents who had won my eternal gratitude and friendship at a very heavy cost to themselves and their child. Send back your thoughts to that eventful year, and tell me if you can recollect all the important changes of that time."

"It would be strange if I could not, sir. My dear mother died in the early spring. You resigned from the army and took me to the seaside in the summer, so that we both might recruit our strength."

"Do you recollect what happened to you there?" solemnly inquired the major.

"Yes," replied Tudor Hereward, with a smile. "Something happened to me that might have formed the text for a Sunday-school sermon on disobedience to parents! Certainly, I shall never forget that! I went out bathing against orders, for the waves were very high and the sea very rough. You had refused to allow me to go in the water. But when you were smoking your afternoon cigar in the gentleman's reading-room, and Alick was gossiping with the chambermaid, I found my opportunity and slipped away to the beach and went in to bathe. Almost immediately the under-current sucked me in, drew me down and

whirled me out to sea. Then commenced a death-struggle that ended in suffocation and complete unconsciousness. When I came to life again—it might have been hours, days or weeks afterwards—I found myself lying in my bed at the hotel, and feeling as if needles were running through every vein and artery in my body and piercing every nerve. The room was full of women. My memory is very hazy from that time until we went home to Cloud-Capped Cliffs."

"Yes, for you had a severe illness after that," said the major.

"But I remember this—hearing some of the women about me saying that Major Hereward had most liberally rewarded the two men who had brought me to the shore," added Tudor Hereward.

"Ah, yes! I rewarded the two men who brought you in! But the brave young fellow who really saved your life by the sacrifice of his own—he had passed above all earthly reward," said the major, with much emotion.

"I—I—I never heard of this before! Who was he?" demanded the young man, in an agitated voice.

"Joseph Wyvil, Lilith's father."

"I knew nothing of this!"

"No; and it may seem strange to you that you were never told. But the very truth is, that the knowledge of the tragedy was withheld from you at first in tender consideration. You were a very delicate and sensitive lad, and you were also very ill. It would have excited and distressed you in a perilous degree to have been told that the brave young fellow who saved your life had lost his own. So it was thought best to keep the sorrowful knowledge from you. I always meant to tell you, Tudor, but I put off the sad task from day to day. Afterwards, when we went back to Cloud Cliffs, and the scene changed and time passed, the subject slowly sank into the solemn

silence of a loving and sorrowful memory. But now the time has come when I must tell you the whole pathetic story of your rescue from death."

"Had you not better defer this to some future time, my dear father? Will not the subject agitate and exhaust you too much?" inquired Tudor Hereward, who had been a deeply interested listener to his father's revelations, yet who feared that the invalid was overtasking himself. Would it not do for to-morrow?"

"No, my son! The time has now come when it is absolutely necessary that you should know the whole truth. And therefore I shall suffer less in telling the story and getting it off my mind than I should in keeping a longer silence."

"Very well, my dear sir. Go on, if you must! But I beg you to spare yourself as much as possible."

"It is necessary that I should revert briefly to my early life, Tudor. You know so little of it."

"I shall be much pleased to know more of it, sir."

"But you do know, I suppose, that my forefathers and yours owned very large manors down in the State of Maryland."

"Yes," said the young man, with an amused smile, "I have heard all that from our boastful old family servants, who came with you from Maryland. They boast that the first Hereward who settled in Maryland used to stand upon a very high hill in the midst of his estates, and declare that, from that centre to the circumference bounded by the horizon, all the land in sight was his own."

"Ah, well! that boast may or may not have been a true one! But, at all events, in many generations of high not to say 'riotous living,' all that land gradually melted away from the possession of the Herewards. In my father's time there was nothing left of the old manor but a large, dilapidated mansion house, with a few acres of worn-out land, and a few tumble-down

sheds and out-houses. And these were all heavily mortgaged beyond hope of redemption. My father struggled on to keep the old homestead over our heads as long as my mother lived. She left us when I was about fifteen years of age, having fallen a victim, as I firmly believe, to constant anxiety and worry rather than to disease."

"I had no idea that your early life had been so full of trial, sir," said the son, in a sympathetic tone.

"Well, well, it is past. After my mother left us, there remained only my father and myself, for I had neither sister nor brother. He ceased then to strive against fate. He sold house, land, stock and furniture, parted with all his possessions, indeed, except his family servants. He paid every debt he owed in the world. Then, taking his son and his favorite servants, he went to the city of Richmond and took a bookkeeper's place in a large mercantile establishment. It was a great fall for a country gentleman!" added Major Hereward, with a sigh.

"And yet for that I honor my grandfather, more than I do all the preceding Herewards, who wasted their substance in feasting and 'riotous living,'" said Tudor Hereward, bluntly.

"Yes, he lived and died without a stain upon his pure and noble name. It was some months after his removal to Richmond in November, 18—, that his old and intimate friend, General ——, was elected President of the United States. In the following March, my father was enabled, through his powerful friend, to gratify the ambition of my boyhood, and procure for me an appointment as cadet at the Military Academy at West Point. This, of course, settled my career in life."

"But when you went to West Point how fared my grandfather, bereft of home and family, and tied down

to a bookkeeper's desk in the warehouse of a crowded city?" inquired Tudor Hereward, with much interest.

"I never left him. Ah! my son, the change was too great for him. One day he came home from his counting-house, spent the evening with me talking of my future prospects, then rose to go to his bedroom, dropped back into his chair and passed away before I could spring to his side. It was a sudden, painless exit. He indeed was changed 'in the twinkling of an eye.' He knew not death."

"Was it—apoplexy?" inquired Tudor Hereward, in a low, grave tone.

"So the doctors said."

"And you, at the age of sixteen, were alone in the world!"

"Yes, quite alone; and after all remaining debts were paid I was nearly out of money. But I had my cadetship, and so, after I had settled my affairs in Richmond, I went to West Point and entered the Military Academy, where constant occupation left me little or no time to brood over family troubles."

"You are talking too long for your strength, sir. You are wearying yourself," interrupted his son.

"Yes. Give me that cordial, and I will drink it and rest for a few moments."

Tudor Hereward poured out the restorative from the bottle into a glass and gave it to the patient, who immediately after drinking it dropped into the sudden, swoon-like sleep of exhaustion which accompanied his malady.

The son sat patiently watching the sleep of the father until an hour later, when the latter awoke much rested, and inquired:

"Where was I?—in my reminiscences, I mean."

"At West Point, sir," replied Tudor, with a smile.

"Ah, yes! Well, at the close of the academic course I graduated with some credit. Then the memory of

my dear father still befriended me at the War Department. I received my lieutenant's commission, and, instead of being sent to some frontier fort in the far West, I was appointed to a regiment then going to Fortress Monroe. It was there that I first met Evelyn Tudor."

"My mother!"

"Yes, your mother. She was the daughter, as you know, and the only surviving child, of Edward Tudor, of Cloud Cliffs, my father's dearest college friend and my own godfather, for whom I was named. She was a guest and relative of our colonel's wife. I met her first at a Christmas ball; and after that at all the social gatherings at the fort and in the neighborhood. We were mutually pleased with each other, and in a short time we became devotedly attached to one another."

"Oh! I can imagine that, sir; for I remember how perfectly united you were in heart and mind."

"Yes, ours was the true union that death does not sever. Well, in due time I proposed to her and was accepted. And not until her uncle, our colonel, suggested that marriage settlements should be drawn up securing the whole of her real and personal property to herself and to any children that she might have, did I know or even suspect that she was an heiress, twenty-one years of age, with full powers to dispose of herself and her fortune. Heaven knows it was her precious self and not her fortune I coveted. She opposed the settlement upon herself. She would have given me everything; but the colonel was firm, and so was I. I would not take her fortune. The colonel sustained me in my resolution. We carried the point, and every penny of her estate was settled upon herself and her prospective children. That is the reason, Tudor, why I am at this hour a very 'poor,' though I hope a very 'honest' man, with nothing to leave

my dear adopted daughter but my blessing and my hopes."

"I have said, sir, that I will provide for her."

"And I have said there is but one way in which you can honorably do so. But let that pass for the present. I must get on with my narrative. We were married in the early spring. I obtained leave of absence and went on a lengthened bridal tour. When we returned to the fort at the end of five weeks, which was also the end of my leave, I found our regiment under orders to Fort Protection, in Arizona. I might have resigned from the army and settled on my wife's estate, as many of our friends advised me to do; but I had been educated at the expense of my country, and so I felt in honor bound to render some service to the country in return. Or I might have left my wife in her patrimonial home and gone alone with my regiment to the far southwest; but that plan she would not agree to. She, brought up in luxury as she had been, did not flinch from the prospective hardships of frontier camp life. She thought, as I did, that there could be no evil so great as separation."

"Ah, yes, even in my time I have heard my mother say that! 'No evil so great as separation.'"

"In the autumn we commenced our journey to the frontier, where we at length arrived without calamity. And then commenced for us a life of privation and hardship difficult for anyone in the civilized East to believe in."

"I have often heard my mother speak of those times, yet always as picturesque and rather pleasant memories."

"Her sunny temper brightened the darkest side of every event. But it was hard on her. You were born at Fort Protection, Arizona. And in the course of the next nine years, which we spent from fort to fort on the Western frontier, two other boys and two girls

were given us. Their little, lonely graves lie far apart all along the line from Washington Territory to Lower California. Ah, well!"

"She has met her children again in their heavenly mansions," whispered Tudor, gently, to soothe these troubled memories.

"Yes, undoubtedly; as her faith had taught her to hope and expect. It was in the autumn of our ninth year on the frontier, and I had risen by slow promotions to the rank of captain, which I had held about two years, when I was detached from my old regiment and ordered to take command of Fort Refuge, in the northwest part of Washington Territory."

"My dear father," interrupted the young man, "you have now brought your personal history down to a point from which I can remember everything of importance that passed under my own eyes."

"Very well, Tudor. Do you remember our journey that severe winter?"

"I should think so. It is the first very distinct memory that I have. Our life at Fort Protection was so monotonous that its picture hangs on the walls of my memory, a mere haze of forts, cypress swamps, wigwams, Indians, soldiers and venomous reptiles! But that long march from California to Washington Territory! I remember that we suffered from cold, and that the wagons were often blockaded by snow. I remember that at last, when we reached Fort Storm, the buildings were half buried in snow. And even to this day my ideas of the Arctic regions are based upon my memory of that winter in Washington Territory."

"Ah, yes! It was during that terrible winter in that terrible climate your mother's health broke down. Our surgeon declared that unless she should be taken to a warmer climate she must soon and surely die. Then, for the first time in my nine years of hard service, I

applied for leave of absence and obtained it. Do you remember our journey across the Rocky Mountains?"

"Perfectly. We set out in March. It was a harder journey than the one in the autumn. We were more frequently blockaded with snow. We melted some of it to get water for our horses and mules, and for our own tea and coffee as well."

"Yes, it was a hard journey as well as a long one for her! It was in the latter part of April that we reached this place, her old home, where we received the warmest of warm welcomes from the old servants who had kept the house in order during our long absence, and from old friends and neighbors who flocked to see her. The country was looking beautiful in that last week in April. All the fruit trees and bushes were in full blossom, very refreshing to see after our wintry journey."

"I remember my delight to be at home, and how much better she grew in her dear native air. She used to take me out with her in her pony carriage. That month of May which followed our arrival was the pleasantest reminiscence of my boyhood."

"But it was short. Her improvement was deceptive. One happy month in her childhood's home and then a fatal relapse, a rapid decline, and an easy departure!"

"I remember! I remember!" murmured the young man, in a broken voice.

"You had been the darling of her soul, her only surviving child. You had shown symptoms of the same hereditary malady which had been so fatal to herself and to both her parents. In her anxiety for your future she made me promise to resign from the army and to turn my whole attention to agricultural life, and to the training and education of our son."

"And when her love for me thus consigned me to your charge, her love for you, sir, inspired her with many a serious talk to me. She made me promise that

my very first consideration, after my duty to our Lord, should always be my duty to you. That your will should always be my law. I hope that I have kept my promise, sir!"

"You have! You have, Tudor! up to this present day. And I have kept mine. Immediately after my wife's funeral, I resigned from the army—thinking, indeed, that my nine years of very hard service and great sacrifice had entitled me to release. Then, to get up your strength, I took you to a small, quiet place on the coast of New Jersey. And there that sacred debt was incurred which you can only cancel by the gift of yourself!"

"Ah! yes! tell me how that was done."

"We had been at the Look-Out House on the beach for some weeks. It was a blazing hot day near the last of July—the hottest day of the whole season. Everybody was indoors, keeping in the shade. I was lounging in the reading-room, the coolest room in the hotel, when I missed you. I do not know how long you had been away; but I remember that I had not seen you for an hour. I always dreaded your attraction to the sea. So as soon as I discovered that you were nowhere about the hotel, I hastened down to the sands, and went to the bathing-machine we were in the habit of using and where I expected to find you. And now, Tudor, what I am about to tell you happened all in a minute."

"Yes, sir."

"As I neared the spot, I saw a number of people running wildly in the same direction, and I heard outcries, all to the effect that a boy while he was bathing had been drawn down by the under-current and carried out to sea and was drowning. And at the same instant I saw a young laborer, who was at work near by under the burning sun, tear off his shirt, and all heated and perspiring as he was, strike right and

left, cleaving his way through the panic-stricken crowd, fling himself into the sea and swim lustily for the spot where the last glimpse of the drowning boy had been seen! He dived and rose again, bringing the insensible boy to the surface amid the deafening cheers and huzzas of the crowd on the beach! He swam laboriously towards the shore, bearing the insensible body of the lad. As he neared the sands everyone saw his failing condition, and two men waded out to meet him. As with the last effort of failing life, he lifted the boy and flung him into the outstretched arms of the men who dexterously caught him, and then the brave fellow sank—sank never to rise again!"

The major, much affected by this reminiscence, covered his face with his hands.

Tudor sighed in sympathy as he inquired:

"How could this have happened that the strong young swimmer went down to death in this way?"

"The brave fellow had been working all day in the hot sun. He was therefore very much over-heated when he threw himself into the water to rescue a child from drowning. It was supposed that he was seized with cramp at the moment he threw the boy to the two men who came out to meet him. And the instant in which he sank he was sucked in by the under-current and whirled out to sea. All this that I have taken so long to tell you happened in a few seconds, as I came up to the beach."

"Was no effort made to save him?"

"Yes, every possible effort. You may be sure, for one, that my coat was off in an instant, and I was in the sea, swimming to the rescue of the gallant fellow who had saved the life of my boy, and leaving that half-drowned boy to the care of the experienced men who had brought him in. Other men, also fired to enthusiasm by Wyvil's example, plunged into the sea

and swam to his rescue, and boats were taken out to watch for his rising, but all in vain. Even when so much time had passed that all hope of saving his life was gone, we did not, could not leave the spot, but continued on the beach, watching, hoping, and trying to recover his body, until night fell and darkness covered the sea."

"Was his body never found?"

"Not that night. Indeed, all the 'longshoremen told us that it could not be recovered until the tide should turn, when it might be washed ashore. After leaving the beach I went back to the hotel to look after my son. I found you comfortably sleeping in your own bed, carefully watched over by Nancy and a half a roomful of sympathizing women. You seemed to be doing well then. You were saved!"

"But at what a costly price! A heroe's life for a child's!" exclaimed the young man.

"And a husband's and a father's life as well, Tudor."

"A woeful thought!"

"Yes, it was. I could not rest for a moment. After looking at you for a few minutes, I left you again in charge of Nancy, and went out to inquire concerning the family and friends of the young hero, or if he had any. I learned that he was an Englishman, lately arrived in the country with his young wife. That they occupied a small cottage, with a garden, at a village about three miles back from the coast. That they had no relations in this country, and none in England that any of their neighbors had ever heard them speak of. That they were members of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, at which many of the seaside visitors attended divine service on Sundays. Lastly, that no one had gone to her to break the news of her awful bereavement."

"It would have required great nerve to perform that

sorrowful duty," said Tudor Hereward, with a deep sigh.

"Yes! more nerve than I could command at that hour. I therefore went to see the Rev. Mr. Kerr, the Rector of St. Luke's, at his rectory, next to the church. I found him in his study. He had heard of the catastrophe. And when I told him that the widow knew nothing of her terrible loss, and that I feared some injudicious person might give her a dangerous or even fatal shock by telling the dreadful news too suddenly; that I myself would go to her, but I was a perfect stranger—Mr. Kerr anticipated the favor I was about to beg of him by saying that he himself would go to her at once, as she was one of his own flock. Then I begged him to assure her of my profound sorrow for her loss, and of my earnest desire to comfort and assist her to the very utmost of my power, and to ask her permission for me to see her in the morning. The rector promised all I wished, and rang and ordered his gig. It was late when I got back to the hotel. I went to bed, but could not sleep at all. With the earliest dawn of day I was up and out on the beach, where the first news that met me was that the body of the young hero had been thrown up by the sea during the night, and now lay on the beach awaiting the arrival of the coroner, who had been summoned. Some one had covered the body over with a piece of sail-cloth, and the by-standers would have uncovered it for my view, but I turned away; I could not look upon the dead face then. I got back to the hotel by sunrise, saw you still sleeping quietly; gave some directions for your treatment to Nancy; drank a single cup of very strong coffee; engaged a carriage and drove to the rectory; found Mr. Kerr at breakfast and waited until he got through. As soon as he came to me in the study, and heard from me that the body of young Wyvil had been recovered, and that the

fishermen would bear it home to the widow as soon as the inquest should be over, he again forestalled my request by offering to go with me to the widow to prepare her against the shock. You know, Tudor, that I was most anxious to be useful to her."

"Oh, yes, sir! yes!"

"Half an hour after we were seated together in the carriage, bowling rapidly on to Seawood, the village where she lived. During the drive the rector told me how he had communicated to the young widow the news of her awful bereavement. He had found her waiting for her husband's return from his day's work, and wondering what had kept him away so late. But she was not alarmed at his absence, nor the least surprised at the rector's visit, for he had once before made a pastoral call in the evening when he knew that her husband would be home. And even then she received her pastor with an apology for 'Joseph's absence,' saying that she expected him every moment, however.

"Oh! it was dreadful, yes, dreadful, Tudor—dreadful for the kind-hearted rector to have to tell that child-wife the tidings that he told her as tenderly as he could—that her husband would return no more alive," sighed Major Hereward. And then he remained silent so long that his son inquired:

"And how did she bear the terrible stroke?"

"At first, the rector said, she seemed stunned, and stared stupidly in his face. But when she realized the awful truth she fell into the most violent paroxysms of grief. All his efforts to comfort or to control her were utterly fruitless. He then went out and called in her nearest neighbors, and after doing all that he could in the case he left her in their charge and returned home."

"Did she rally from that stroke?"

"Yes, temporarily. Not then, however. By the time

the rector had finished the account he was giving me the carriage drew up before the widow's cottage. I then asked Mr. Kerr if he had delivered my message to her, and if he had prepared her to expect my visit this morning. He assured me that he had done so as well as he could under the circumstances. Then we entered the cottage—a neat, little, white, framed house of one story, surrounded by a pretty garden. We found the young widow in the prim, little front sitting-room, which was half-filled with condoling neighbors. The first glance at her showed me a fair young creature, who seemed not twenty years of age, and who was shortly to become a mother. Her violent paroxysms of grief had exhausted her, and she sat in her arm-chair, white, faint, dazed—in an utter collapse of despair."

"And all for my little life!"

"It could not be helped. Mr. Kerr took me up to her and introduced me. I could not speak at first. I could only take the pale hand she silently offered me and hold it tenderly between my own, while Mr. Kerr told her all that I myself would have told, could I have commanded my voice, how the body of her husband had been found at dawn, and how the bearers were bringing it home. And how anxious I was to serve her in any and every way to the utmost extent of my power. She did not seem to care, or even to hear, what the minister said, except when he referred to the coming of the body. Then she lifted herself from her chair, and holding by the arms, bent eagerly forward looking through the door at a little procession that was approaching the house. In another minute the bearers bore the body in at the door, and placed it on its bier in the middle of the room. Tudor, even at this distant time I cannot bear to recall the scene that followed! Give me a little more of that cordial."

The young man filled a wineglass half full of the restorative, and gave it to his father. When the latter had drank it and returned the glass he resumed his narrative:

"That poor little child-widow, so awfully bereaved, so soon to be a mother, had no self-control whatever. At the sight of her husband's remains she fell again into the most violent paroxysms of grief and despair, that all our endeavors failed to quiet. She had at length to be carried by the women to her bed in the adjoining room. Then I went up to the bier standing in the middle of the room, to look on the face of him who had saved my child at the cost of his life. Some good people at the hotel had seen to it that the form was dressed in a neat suit of clothes, and that the dark curling hair and beard were carefully combed and brushed. How handsome was the still face! How peaceful the whole aspect! In his appearance there was no sign of a violent death—no discoloration, no distortion, as is often the case with the drowned; but a most delicate pallor and a most serene repose. I turned away to leave the house. I left a sum of money in the hands of one of the neighbors for the immediate needs of the young widow, and a message to the effect that I should make her future welfare and that of her coming child my own especial care henceforth. And that I should return to see her very soon. All this was no more than my bounden duty, Tudor."

"Not any more."

"I re-entered the carriage with my companion and drove back to the rectory, where Mr. Kerr got out, and thence to the hotel, where I dismissed the carriage. But I must cut short these sad details. I took full charge of the funeral arrangements. Two days later the body of the young hero was conveyed to St. Luke's Cemetery, followed by the largest procession

that had ever been seen in Seawood, and there laid in its last low resting-place."

"And—the young widow?"

"The terrible anguish and excitement she had suffered produced a disastrous effect upon her. She was prematurely confined and became the mother of a very fragile and delicate girl baby. But she never rallied from her illness. She sank surely, though slowly. It was on Monday morning, just one week from the day on which the brave young fellow had lost his life in saving that of my boy, and I was anxiously watching beside your sick-bed, Tudor, when I received a visit from the rector. He had come to ask me to go with him to see the young widow, who was in a dying condition and who had asked to see me. I went with him immediately. When we reached the cottage and entered the sick-room, on the very first glance at the young creature in the bed, I saw death in her pallid face, hollow cheeks and sunken eyes."

Tudor Hereward moaned.

"Yet she smiled brightly when I approached the bed and bent over her—speechless as upon the first awful occasion of meeting her. I could not speak. She laid her hand upon the babe that was sleeping by her side and looked up into my face with a yearning, pleading, prayerful gaze that was more expressive, more eloquent and overpowering than any words could have been. Then I took her hand. My tongue was loosened, and in a broken voice, and with tears that could not be repressed, I told her that the child, who had been orphaned for my child's sake, should find in me the most devoted father; that I would adopt, rear, educate, and provide for her, as for my own only daughter—for I had no other. All this I promised Elizabeth Wyvil, and I sealed the promise with the most solemn oath. She was so low that I feared she did not hear me. I

stooped and asked her, if she understood my promise, to press the hand that I laid in hers. Her pale fingers closed on mine. She looked up, smiled, and passed away—so peacefully that I should not have known she was gone had not the old nurse risen and drawn the sheet over the vacant face. I think that, knowing her babe was well taken care of, she was happy to depart and be with him."

"Heaven and earth! Two fine lives lost for one frail child! A little family nest broken up in its beginning! The father and the mother gone in their youth! A babe left without a relative in the world to take care of it! Oh, it was a heavy price to pay for one child's life!" exclaimed the young man, with much emotion.

"Yet a life so dear to me that my own life hung on it! So that I could not— Oh, Tudor! how selfish we all are! At least I know how selfish I am. Heaven help me! Yet I did all that I could do. I procured a first-class nurse for the child, and brought them both to the hotel to be under Nancy's supervision. I laid the remains of the young wife beside those of her husband in the cemetery of St. Luke's. I paid all their debts. I distributed the plain furniture among the poor of the village. I had all the letters, papers, photographs, trinkets, and other small personal effects of the young couple, packed into a box and brought away, to be preserved, for the future use of the child, thinking that in the years to come, if she should live, she would like to possess these mementos of the parents she had never known. There were among them a fine double photograph of the young pair, taken, as the endorsement showed, on their wedding-day, presenting the faces of a frank, happy youth and girl. There were other photographs, which, from their resemblance to one or the other of the young couple, must have been family pictures. There were also many packets of letters and clippings from news-

papers, neatly tied up together. All these I have carefully preserved up to this day, and shall soon deliver over to their rightful owner. Now, Tudor, my narrative draws to a close. As soon as you were able to travel we returned to Cloud Cliffs, taking the orphan infant with us. I have kept my solemn promise to the dying mother. I have brought up her child as my own daughter. I have had her carefully educated at home. I can do no more for her. When I depart she will be left penniless, homeless, friendless—but for this house and its master, whose shelter and protection she could not accept but upon the conditions I have already named. Come, Tudor, you know what I mean! You know the sacred debt we owe! Now what do you intend to do?" anxiously inquired Major Hereward.

The young man was silent, with his head bowed upon his open hands.

"She is fit to be your wife, Tudor. She is fit to be the wife of any man, of any rank, who is worthy to have her. Come, Tudor!"

Still the young man was silent.

"Then I must tell you her secret. The secret that I surprised from her. The maiden loves you, my son."

Still no response.

"Lilith loves you, Tudor."

Dead silence.

"Why do you not answer me, my son?"

"Father," he said, at length, lifting his handsome head, "I will marry Lilith Wyvil if she will accept me. And I will try to make her happy."

CHAPTER V

A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE

When Lilith Wyvil left the sick-room, in sore need of food and rest, but still more in need of sleep, she would have gone at once to her bed-chamber, to lie down and dream of the blessedness that she imagined must surely await her as the wife of the one man on earth whom her love and faith had exaggerated into a very king of men.

But as she crossed the hall she was captured by Nancy Skamp, who came out of the front dressing-closet, and stopped her young mistress with blunt words.

"Dar! I jest t'ought how it was gwine to be. Too tired to eat a mouffu1. An' gwine to go upsta'rs an' fling yerse'f down on de top o' de bed, wid all yer close on, I dessay. Now I ain't a-gwine to pimmit no sich fing. Come right downsta'rs 'long o' me, an' eat some b'eakfas'—b'eakfas' at two o'clock in de arternoon! I call it flyin' in de face ob natur'. I do, indeed."

"I am not the least hungry, Aunt Nancy, but I am very, very sleepy," gently replied Lilith.

"Wot all dat got to do wid it? All dat makes no deffunce at all. An' I ain't a-gwine to listen to no sich dejections. I nussed yer wen yer was nuffin but a little baby. An' I reckon I got de right to have my say inter yer interes'."

"Indeed you have, Aunt Nancy," gratefully responded Lilith.

"Well, den, now listen to me good. Never mine 'bout yer not bein' hunggy. Yer eat, an' yer ap'tite will come to yer. An' yer'll git up yer strent'. But ef yer doan eat yer'll get so weak yer can't set up an' nuss de ole marster. An' den wot de ole marster

gwine do? Gwine to die for want ob popper nussin'. I seen people die fo' want ob dat 'fo' now. 'Deed has I."

This last argument prevailed with Lilith, and she preceded the servant downstairs to the pleasant sitting-room, where, before the open hickory wood fire stood a rocking-chair, with a footstool below it, and beside it a little round table, covered with a white cloth, and adorned with a silver and china breakfast service for one.

"Now yer set right down dar in dat dar easy-cha'r, an' put yer feet to de fire, w'ile I go an' get yer b'eakfas'—b'eakfas' at two o'clock in de arternoon. I calls it flyin' in de face. I does, indeed," grumbled Nancy, as she left the room.

Lilith dropped exhausted into the rocking-chair, leaned back, and immediately fell asleep, and dreamed that she stood, dressed in bridal array, beside Tudor Hereward, before the altar of the parish church of St. Joseph's, at Frosthill; that Major Hereward, who had miraculously recovered his health, gave her away, and Tudor was in the act of putting the wedding ring on her finger, when she was rudely awakened—

"Dar, now! Wot I tell yer? Let yerse'f run down so low yer can't keep yer eyes open one minute. Wake up, honey, an' eat yer b'eakfas'—b'eakfas' at two o'clock in de arternoon! 'Deed, I calls it flyin'!"

Lilith started out of her happy dream to find herself in the rocking-chair before the fire, and Nancy standing beside the table, upon which she had arranged a dainty repast of rich coffee, cream, toast, poached eggs and broiled partridge.

Lilith smiled, thanked her servant, and turned her chair to the table.

She really felt too tired and sleepy to eat; but when to please Nancy she took a mouthful of the toast she

was surprised to find how very hungry she suddenly became.

And so, to Nancy's great satisfaction, she made a healthy meal. And when she finished it she did not feel nearly so sleepy as she had felt when she had begun it.

And this was well, for her strength was to be further taxed before she was to be permitted to rest.

Nancy took the little breakfast out to the kitchen, and returned with an armful of round hickory sticks which she piled upon the fire, which immediately leaped into a roaring flame.

"It's mighty cold, I tell yer all good, Miss Lilith! An' it's a-gwine to get a heap colder! Nebber see a colder New Year's Day in all my life!" said the woman, as she stood basking before the blazing fire.

And indeed the aspect of the earth, as seen through the front and side windows of this room, seemed to confirm her words.

For the ground was covered deeply with frozen snow, and all the trees and bushes were sheathed in ice and hung thickly with pendant icicles.

Nancy left the room again and returned with another armful of hickory sticks and threw them upon the fire, which received them with a roar and a burst of flame.

"Why don't you let Alick or Steve do that? It is their work, not yours!" said the young lady.

" 'Caze I choose to do it myse'f radder dan wait deir lazy motions, Miss Lilith! But w'y doan yer go to bed, now yer's had yer b'eakfas'—b'eakfas' at two o'clock in de arternoon! Putty way to begin de New Year! 'Deed it's flyin' in de face! Now, w'y doan yer go to bed, honey?"

"Because I have waked up now. Besides, I want to distribute the New Year's gifts, if you will call the servants in. I had really forgotten them."

"No wonder, wid all yer had on yer mine, Miss Lilith! Will I fetch all de niggers in togedder?"

"No! Bring the women and girls first," said the young lady, as she arose and went to the corner cupboard, in the angle of the wall between the front and the side windows, opened it and took from it various parcels, which she brought and piled upon the little round table.

It required several trips between the cupboard and the table before all the parcels were transferred from the former to the latter, and the cupboard was closed.

Then Lilith dropped into her chair to wait.

Meanwhile Nancy had gone out to drum up all the maids about the house, and she soon returned with about half a dozen women and girls who entered the room respectfully but boisterously, all exclaiming, with courtesies:

"Happy New Year, honey!"

"Happy New Year, Miss Lilith!"

"Happy New Year, young mist'ess!"

"I thank you all very much and wish you all very many good and happy New Years! But do not be noisy. Remember that the master's room is just over this one and that he is very, very ill," said Lilith, gently and gravely.

"I's so sorry!"

"Po' ole marse!"

"I hopes he'll get ober it like he did befo'."

These words came in a chorus of subdued voices.

Lilith echoed the hope, and then began to distribute the gay plaid woolen dresses that she had selected for the maids.

These were received with profuse delight and gratitude expressed in such quaint phrases as—

"Hush, honey!"

"Whip, you hosses!"

"Ain't it jam!"

"Won't I cut a dash!"

And when the last dress had been given out Lilith dismissed her maids, who retired with many low courtesies.

Then the men and boys were summoned. They entered the room more quietly than the women and girls had done; and their New Year's salutations were more subdued and respectful.

They received the various woolen scarfs, socks, gloves, fur caps, mauds, and other comfortable defences against cold weather, with much gratification and thankfulness, and retired in the same orderly manner in which they had entered.

When the last one had left the room, Lilith called Nancy to her side and gave the woman the last parcel that lay on the table.

It contained a beautiful black mohair alpaca, and a piece of book muslin for head and neck-handkerchiefs and aprons.

"Last and best, Miss Lilith! T'anky, miss; I'll 'member yer in my prayers. 'Deed I will. T'anky, miss."

"By the way, what church are you going to join this year, Aunt Nancy?" inquired the young lady, referring to a well-known eccentricity of the woman's.

"I was a-finkin' ob j'inin' de Free Wills, 'deed I was, honey! 'Caze, yer see as many 'sieties as I 'long to, I's nebber been 'mersed yet! An' 'mersion may be necessary, as de Free Wills do say. An' so, as it is bes' always to be on de safe side, I fink I shall jine de Free Wills."

"And then you will be a member of almost every Christian sect," said Lilith, with a smile.

"I hope so, Miss Lilith, 'caze I wants to be! Dat's de on'y way to be on de safe side. 'Caze dey is all deff'unt an' some opperside; an' I doan know w'ich is right an' w'ich is wrong; and I doan care much neider,

but I wants to be on de safe side an' save my mortal soul alibe; so I jine 'em all, so as not to miss de true one; an' den, young mist'ess, yer see, whoebber's wrong, I is sure to be right."

"But when you join one sect, does not another discard you?"

"Hi, young mist'ess, who yer fink a fool? Fink I gwine gib myse'f 'way like dat? I nebber tells 'em nothin' 'bout wot I jines. I keep in 'long ob all ob 'em, so I be sure of de right one. I 'fesses to de pries'; I sings an' shouts at de camp meetin's; I sits mum chance 'mong de Inner Lights—"

"Wherever did you meet with the Inner Lights, as you call them?"

"When I was travelin' long ob de ole marse to take care ob de little marse—years an' years ago. Yes, I jines 'em all, an' I keeps in long ob 'em all. I goes to de water wid de Free Wills ebery time a new sister or brudder is goin' to be 'mersed. An' I'm gwine to be a Free Will myse'f."

"And how many more sects do you mean to connect yourself with?"

"Dunno, honey, till I fine 'em out. I do hear as dere is two new 'sieties, w'ich one is called de New Light an de oder de Second Adventurers. I'm gwine to 'quire into dem, an' jine 'em de fuss chance I get. 'Caze, yer see, all de res' may be wrong, an' one ob dem right. An' it would be a awful fing if I been wrong all my life an' lose my mortal soul, arter all de trouble I hab took to save it. 'Deed, I ain't gwine to leave no stone unturned, as the old sayin' says."

"Heaven help you, Nancy! I cannot!" said Lilith, very gravely, with a sudden sense of the spiritual darkness in which this eccentric creature walked.

What reply Nancy might have made was cut short by the entrance of Alick to announce:

"A gem'an in de parlor a-waitin' to see yer, miss."

"What gentleman, Alick?"

"Young Mr.—Mr.—Wot is his name ag'in?—Mr.—Mr.—Hal—Hallo—I mean dat young youth wot has come on to old Mr. Rushmore's place."

"Oh! young Mr. Hilary. Tell him I will be down in a few minutes," said Lilith, who never refused to see a visitor. And she ran upstairs to change her white wrapper for a home dress.

In a very short time she appeared in the parlor dressed in a crimson cashmere suit, lace collar and cuffs, and with her curling black hair gathered into a fine black net.

Standing on the rug, with his back to the roaring hickory fire, stood a tall, slight young man, with a thin face, a broad, full forehead, a turned-up nose, a florid complexion—now much exaggerated by the cold—bright red whiskers and mustache, and a shock of bright red hair that thickly covered his head, and all this stood out around his sanguine face like a halo, as his fond mother said; though his frank, merry countenance certainly did not suggest sanctity.

With full confidence in his welcome, he had laid off his overcoat and fur cap and left them in the hall, and he now stood before the fire in a morning suit of bottle-green broadcloth, with a large roll of white paper sticking from his pocket, and with a choice bouquet in his hand—a bouquet that filled the whole room with a rich, aromatic fragrance.

"Good-morning, Miss Wyvil! A Happy New Year to you! This is the first I have made to-day, believe me! I should have been here hours earlier, only I was bound to have these flowers cut fresh this morning, and to make sure of it I rode to the florist's at Frosthill, and selected them myself and saw them put up myself. See, they have all long stems, and they will keep a long time if you put them in water with a few drops of ammonia. Will you kindly accept them?"

"Thank you very much; Mr. Hilary, they are really beautiful," replied Lilith, with a slight smile at the quaintness of her visitor's manners. "I hope your mother and sisters are quite well," she added.

"Oh, just roaring well! Never were ill in all their lives, and never were so well as now! How's all with you?"

"My father is suffering from an attack of his old malady, I regret to say," gravely replied Lilith.

"Eh! I didn't hear about it," exclaimed Hilary, with awakened interest.

"Oh, it is only since yesterday afternoon."

"You don't say! Is he very bad?"

"Oh, I trust not! He is much better this morning," said Lilith, whose hopes had been much strengthened.

"And the Honorable! Did he come down for the holidays?"

"No, but he came this morning to see his father."

"But you say the major is better?"

"Yes, he is much better.

"I am glad of that. I wouldn't like anything to happen to the major. So glad! But I called this morning not only to bring the flowers and wish you a Happy New Year, but to ask you if you will do me the honor to allow me to take you to the theatre to-night?"

"The theatre?" inquired Lilith, wondering what her visitor meant by talking of a theatre in that mountain wilderness and in the depth of winter.

"Yes. You see there has come 'The Grand Montmorencie and Plantagenet Operatic and Dramatic Combination of Beauty and Talent from London and Paris,' as the show-bills describe it, and they are going to perform in the Town Hall at Frosthill. Performance to open with the 'Opera of Figaro's Marriage, to be followed by the tragedy of Macbeth, and concluded with the roaring farce of Fortune's Frolic!'

Just see what a bill!" exclaimed the enthusiast, drawing from his pocket that large roll of paper, unfurling it as a flag, and displaying the programme in large letters of all the colors in the rainbow.

Lilith smiled at the excitement of her visitor.

"Now, then! Will you go? If you will, I will have the sleigh here on time, with plenty of bear-skins and hot stones, and everything to make you comfortable; and I will take first-rate care of you."

"I do not doubt it, and I am very grateful. But I cannot accept your kind offer, for I must not leave Major Hereward at this time," gently replied Lilith.

"Oh, but I thought he was so much better!" exclaimed the young man, in a surprised and disappointed tone.

"He is better, thank Heaven, but he is not well, and I must not leave him."

"What a nuisance! And I thought I should have the delight of taking you to the theatre to-night, and of telling you—but that I can do here!" said Hilary, as he suddenly left his seat, drew a chair close to the side of Lilith, and dropped into it.

Lilith lifted her eyes in surprise and questioning.

"May I tell you here, Miss Wyvil?" he entreated.

"What is it?—Yes—I don't know," replied the girl, confused and somewhat frightened by his manner.

"I wanted to tell you— Don't be afraid. Miss Wyvil! Please don't be afraid, I wouldn't even lift your hand to my lips without your leave, I have so much respect as well as—as the other, for you! Indeed I have."

"I—do not understand you," said Lilith, in a little, low, timid voice, and speaking truly, for she really did not know what he meant, and she feared her visitor must have lost his wits.

"You—you don't understand me?" uneasily inquired Hilary.

"No, I do not."

"Well, that's very awkward. You don't know what I want to tell you?"

"No, indeed."

"This is awful! It makes it so awkward! And I never said it to any young lady before. And I hardly know how to say it now. I thought you would be prepared for it. And you are not?"

"No, I say, I— Hadn't you better compose yourself, Mr. Hilary?" said Lilith, divided between her sense of the duties of hospitality and her fears of her visitor.

Hilary, who had left his seat and was walking nervously up and down the room, shoved his long fingers through his shock of red hair, and answered:

"No! I can't compose myself until I get this off my mind. Oh, Miss Wyvil! You are not blind! You see your lovely face in the glass sometimes. You must know how charming you are. And how utterly impossible it is for me, or for any one, to see you and not to —to—to—admire you, to—to—like you, to—love you, in fact!" he stammered, blushing like a school-girl.

"Oh, Mr. Hilary, pray, pray, do not," pleaded the young lady, drawing away the hand that he clasped and tried to hold.

"But I love you, indeed I do; I want to marry you, indeed I do. It seems to me I never could be happy without you. Why, I know I shan't even enjoy the theatre to-night because I couldn't get you to come with me. But you'll think better of it, won't you? Now that you know I love you and want to marry you, you will come with me after all, won't you? Say, won't you?"

"I am sorry to disappoint you, but I cannot leave Major Hereward," pleaded Lilith, making her refusal as kind as possible.

"Well, I suppose I must give that pleasure up. But

you will marry me, Miss Lilith, won't you, now? You'd never find any one to love you better than I do, or any one more willing to let you walk right over him than I am. Do now, Miss Lilith. Only consent to have me, and you shall have your own way in every blessed respect in this world," he pleaded, losing his timidity and his awkwardness in his earnestness.

"Oh! Mr. Hilary, I am so very sorry to hear you say all this! For I cannot respond. But you have known me such a little time that I cannot in any way be necessary to your welfare or—happiness. I hope you will soon forget to think of me in any way but as a good friend," gently replied the girl.

"Known you such a little time? Oh! Miss Lilith, what has time to do with love? With real, true love, I mean, not with the counterfeit which often goes by its name. Oh, Miss Lilith! the first time I ever saw you, when we first came to the neighborhood last summer, and you and the major and the honorable called on us at Rushmore's, I felt like the poet says:

'As if my soul that moment caught
A something it through life had sought.'

Thomas Moore, you know! So do not talk of time in regard to love. Yet, if you want a few hours to think of this, I will try to wait."

"I do not want a moment to think of it, Mr. Hilary, if you please. I am quite certain that I shall never care for you except as a friend and neighbor. So pray let this subject drop forever. You do not know how it distresses me," said Lilith, gravely.

"I wouldn't distress you for the whole world, Miss Lilith! Perhaps I have been too sudden in my—my—my proposal. If I have you will please to excuse me, for I am new to this sort of thing. I never said such words as I have said to you to any other young lady in the world. No, nor never wished to say them to any

other. You are my first love, Miss Lilith, as I hope and pray I may be yours."

"Oh! please, please say no more, Mr. Hilary. You do me great honor, and I thank you; but please say no more; you do distress me very much," begged the girl.

"Well, I'll not say any more just at present. But—I know you will think of what I have said to you, and I will wait and hope."

As the young man uttered these persistent words the door swung slowly open, and Tudor Hereward walked into the room.

"Is Major Hereward awake? Does he want me?" inquired Lilith, rising with a sigh of infinite relief.

"No, Nancy and Stephen are waiting on him. He does not want you yet; but I shall presently. Good-morning, Mr. Hilary. I wish you a Happy New Year," said the young man, advancing to shake hands with the visitor.

"The same to you and many of them, sir," replied the youth, blushing violently as he returned the greeting.

"How have you managed to live now that the inclemency of the weather has stopped all traveling circuses and wild beast shows?" inquired Tudor Hereward, taking a chair at the fire and inviting the visitor by a polite gesture to resume his own seat.

"Oh! as to that! Haven't you seen the posters? No? Why, they are all over the village, and on every roadside barn, and on every turnpike gate. 'The Grand Montmorencie and Plantagenet Operatic and Dramatic Combination of Beauty and Talent, from London and Paris,' " replied Hilary, hitching up his chair and launching out into a florid eulogium on the expected entertainment.

"From Paris, eh?" inquired Tudor Hereward, with a dubious smile.

"And London," emphatically added Hilary.

"Strange they should honor our little out-of-the-way village while the great cities must be awaiting them with breathless impatience."

"Well, now, isn't it? But still, it is none of our business, so that we benefit by it, is it?" inquired the unsuspicious boy.

"Not that I am aware of," laughed Mr. Hereward.

"You'll go to see them to-night, of course?" continued Hilary.

"No; my father is too ill to be left."

"Why, Miss Wyvil says he is better."

"He is better, but not well enough to be left."

"Oh! I'm very sorry. Please give my respects to him, and tell him that I hope he will soon be about again. And now I think I must go," said the youth, who, seeing that there was not the faintest hope for the renewal of his *tête-à-tête* with Lilith, arose and took his leave.

CHAPTER VI

ANOTHER PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE

"What brought that cub here this morning, Lilith?" inquired Tudor Hereward, as soon as Rufus Hilary had disappeared.

"A New Year's call," replied the girl.

"And that bouquet?"

"A New Year's offering. I shall put them in water, and place them on a stand beside Major Hereward's bed."

"Were they brought for Major Hereward?"

"Mr. Hilary brought them for me."

"Let me put them in water, Lilith, and then let me have a little talk with you," said Hereward, as he took the bouquet from her hands, and placed it temporarily in a water carafe that stood upon a side table.

Then he returned to his seat, drew his chair nearer, took her hand in his, and said:

"Lilith, my father wishes that you and I should marry. What do you say? Will you take me for your husband?"

She lifted her dark eyes to his eyes with one swift and swiftly-withdrawn glance, so full of shy love and joy and delight, that he for the first time recognized the beauty of the girl's spirit, and gazed upon the soft shadow of the downcast lashes on the blushing cheeks with admiration, if not with affection.

"Come, little darling, what do you say? Will you give yourself to me?"

"If—if you want me, Mr. Hereward," she whispered, in a voice so low and timid that he had to bend his head to hear her words.

"That is right," he said, as he drew her to his bosom, and pressed his lips to hers, thus bestowing upon the heart which adored him one moment of unutterable bliss. "That is right. Now we will go to the father, and make his heart glad with the news." And drawing his betrothed bride's arm within his own, he led her upstairs and into the sick-room. Nancy was sitting by the bed, but she immediately arose and made way for the gentleman and lady. Tudor Hereward led Lilith up to his father's side, and said:

"I have brought you my wife that you may bless us both."

The blessing given, the father said:

"And now, Tudor, you must send into Frosthill for the minister and the license. You can write a note to the Rev. Mr. Cave, and ask him to bring the license with him, and we will have the marriage ceremony performed this evening."

Tudor Hereward, with a slight bow of assent, went to the little writing table that stood in the corner of the room, sat down and wrote the note to the Rector

of St. Mark's Church at Frosthill, and then went out to dispatch it by one of the grooms.

Lilith remained seated by the bed, with her hand clasped in that of her foster-father.

"My daughter, bring my bunch of keys, dear."

Major Hereward selected one key, detached it from the ring and held it in his hand, while he said:

"Lilith, my darling, do you remember a large, old-fashioned, black hair trunk that stands among other trunks, barrels and boxes in the northeast garret room? That trunk has not been opened for seventeen years. It is yours, my dear Lilith, as it was your dear father's and mother's before you. It was, in fact, all that they left you. From its contents you will learn more of your family history than even I know; for I have never looked into the packets of letters which I sealed up and locked in that trunk. This, my dear, is the key."

At that moment the door opened and Dr. Kerr, the family physician, walked in, followed by Nancy.

Lilith arose and bowed to the doctor, and withdrew from the room, as was her custom when he entered it. She went to her own chamber and lay down, trying in vain to gain a little of the sleep she so much needed. But the excitement of the day had been too great. She could not compose herself to rest. At length she arose, re-arranged her dress and went down the hall to the little closet occupied by Nancy, who sat there knitting as usual.

"Who is with Major Hereward?" she inquired of the woman.

"Marse Dr. Kerr is wid him. Ole Marse Major ax Marse Dr. pertickler to stay long ob him dis ebenin' to witness somefin'."

"To witness—what?" inquired Lilith, with a conscious blush.

"Oh! I dunno. Somefin'! Maybe his will!"

"Did the doctor say how Major Hereward is?"

"Yes, honey! He say as how he is better; how he may pull t'rough dis time too, same as he allers did."

It was Lilith's habit to refrain from entering the sick-chamber while the doctor was present there. So she went down into the family parlor, where she had eaten her breakfast that morning.

That evening Lilith went to her wardrobe to select her gown. She had one evening dress noticeable only for its simple elegance.

It was of pure white silk, with an overskirt of white tulle, looped with white moss rosebuds. This, with the white gaiters, and white kid gloves, white fan, wreath, and pearl jewelry that belonged to the toilet, had been prepared for a party which was to come off on Old Christmas Day, and to which the girl had been invited. It was extremely unlikely, under present prospects, that she would attend this party; but the dress came in now very conveniently for the marriage ceremony.

So she took heart of grace, and putting her pretty feet into silken hose and white kid gaiters, she dressed herself in the simple but elegant costume of white tulle, looped with white moss roses over white silk. She placed a bunch of white moss rosebuds on her bosom, and a necklace and bracelets of pearls around her pretty throat and wrists.

With a silent prayer for the Lord's help and blessing in this crisis of her life, she opened the door and went out. In the hall she was met by the gray-haired doctor, who surveyed her with surprise and admiration for a moment as he said:

"Come, my pretty, little lady-love. The major sent me out here to wait for you and bring you in."

And he drew Lilith's arm within his own and led her into the sick-room.

The minister, the Rev. Mr. Cave, a half-brother of Dr. Kerr, and bearing a very striking resemblance to

the physician, even to the red face and gray hair, dressed in his full canonicals, stood near the fire.

Mr. Hereward was also there, in full evening dress, with white kid gloves.

As Lilith, led in by the doctor, entered the room, Tudor, with a sudden radiance of surprise and pleasure in his eyes, went to meet her.

But Lilith, with downcast looks and flushed cheeks, passed directly to the bedside, to place her hand in the outstretched palm of her dear foster-father.

"How pretty you are, my darling! Kiss me, my precious one, my pearl of pearls! Give me your last girl's kiss!" he said, drawing her towards him.

She would have clasped her arms around his neck but that his head lay prone upon the pillow. But she took his face between her white-gloved hands, and stooping, kissed his lips again and again, with glowing emotion, until she felt her arm gently clasped and she heard the low-toned voice of her betrothed saying:

"Come, Lilith. You are agitating yourself and my father. Come, the minister waits."

And the impressive ceremony proceeded to its conclusion.

After the benediction had been pronounced the two gray-haired half-brothers, the parson and the doctor, shook hands with bride and bridegroom and wished them every joy.

Then Tudor led Lilith up to the bedside, and she stooped and kissed the father, giving him the first bride's as she had given him the last girl's kiss. He smiled up in her eyes, reached his hand out and clasped the hand of his son for a few moments, and then his fingers relaxed and he instantly fell into one of those sudden sleeps of profound exhaustion which were so frequent with him now.

CHAPTER VII

LILITH'S DISCOVERY

"He sleeps," whispered Hereward, bending to look closely into his father's face. "I think he will do well now. How say you, doctor?"

"I think so, too, Hereward," replied the physician, who had come up to the bedside, and whose "wish was father to his thought." "And now, as the major is doing so well, I must really get into the saddle, for I have yet some patients to see, late as it is. Will you kindly order my horse?"

"Not until you have joined Mr. Cave and myself in a glass of wine below stairs. Will you come, sir?" inquired the young man, addressing the minister.

The latter bowed, and smiled acquiescence. And the three gentlemen turned to leave the room.

As soon as they had left the room Lilith went silently to the dressing-closet where Nancy usually sat, knitting or sewing, listening and peeping.

"Now, Nancy, I wish you to go and sit by my father, and watch him carefully, while I change my dress," said Lilith.

"Yer ain't gwine to take off dat boot'ful dress till bedtime, I hopes, Miss Lilith," objected the woman.

"Oh, yes, I must. I wish to resume my place by father's side, and so must change it," Lilith explained.

The woman said no more, but passed into the sick-room.

Lilith went to her own chamber and quickly made the change.

Then she reappeared in Major Hereward's room dressed in her home costume of soft crimson cashmere.

Nancy vacated her seat and retired to the sewing-closet.

Lilith sat down and looked at the invalid.

He seemed to be sleeping quietly, and the watcher leaned back in her chair and closed her tired eyes; but presently her attention was attracted by the sound of heavy breathing, and she arose and looked at the invalid again.

His face had changed. His eyes were wide open and fixed. He was breathing laboriously.

"Father, father," she said, taking his hand and bending over him.

He neither answered nor in any way noticed her.

She had had no experience with death. She had never seen anyone die. Yet now her breath was suspended, and her own life seemed going from her, as she recognized these sure signs of dissolution.

Swiftly and silently she passed to the closet where the woman in attendance sat sewing.

"Nancy! Oh, Nancy! Go and call Mr. Hereward! And if the doctor and the rector have not left the house, ask them to come up," she said, in a tone scarcely intelligible from excessive agitation.

"Is the ole marse worse?" exclaimed the woman, as she hastily threw aside her work and started up, alarmed at the young lady's words and looks.

"I fear so. Hurry, Nancy, hurry!"

The woman ran downstairs. Lilith hastened back to the bedside. Mr. Hereward, Dr. Kerr and the Rev. Mr. Cave came quickly into the room. Lilith sat by the bed, holding the hand of the dying man. She laid it down and left her place to the doctor, who came up and felt the pulse. Mr. Cave stood beside him. Tudor and Lilith, nearly overcome with emotion, yet keeping their feelings under outward control, stood at the opposite side. Nancy stood at the foot of the bed.

"Can nothing be done?" inquired the son, in a voice of deep pain.

"Nothing," gravely replied the doctor.

"Could you not try stimulants?—electricity?" persistently inquired the son, in a low voice.

"Useless torture! He is dying fast. Be strong, my friend, and—look to your wife," whispered the doctor.

Lilith needed support. Pale as death, trembling and almost fainting, she stood leaning against the footboard. Tudor passed his arm around her waist, whispered some words of encouragement, and so sustained her in her weakness. It was soon over. One long, shuddering sigh and the struggling heart was still. Dr. Kerr closed his sightless eyes, and drew the sheet smoothly over the dead face.

"Let us pray," whispered the rector.

And the little group knelt around that death-bed, and, led by the minister, prayed that this sorrow might be sanctified to their souls' good.

When they arose, Tudor Hereward put his arm around the waist of his weeping young wife, and led her from the death-chamber to her room, and after speaking such words of comfort as his grief-stricken heart could suggest, he left her to the care of the sympathizing colored women who had crowded about the doors at the sign of death. Then Tudor Hereward went to his own room and locked himself in, to struggle alone with his great sorrow.

Five days later the mortal remains of the elder Tudor Hereward were laid in the family vault of St. Mark's Church, Frosthill, in the presence of a large congregation of friends and neighbors.

And the next day Tudor Hereward the younger announced his intention of returning to Washington by the evening train.

"I shall leave you in charge here, Lilith," he said, "with full powers to act during my absence. I cannot take you with me to subject you to the discomforts of hotel life or the distractions of Washington society. Perhaps by the next winter a year hence I may be able

to take a house and fit it up for you; but in the meantime you are better off here. Shall you mind being left here for the present?"

She hesitated; for she did mind very much.

"Shall you be afraid to stay here alone?" he inquired, varying the question.

"Oh, no, not at all afraid!" promptly replied Lilith, glad that she could answer truthfully, as well as satisfactorily.

"That is well! You are a brave little woman, I know. And in fact there is nothing to fear. You will be perfectly safe here with so many servants in the house."

"Yes," said Lilith.

"This is the long session, as you are aware, and Congress will not adjourn before the first of June, and may not do so even then; but I shall try to run down and see you in the interim, if only to spend a Sunday. You will be glad to see me as an occasional visitor, mistress?" he inquired, with a grave smile, putting his fingers under her chin and lifting her sweet, downcast face. "Look at me and answer, Lilith!"

"I shall be very, very glad to see you," she murmured, in a low tone, with a swift, shy glance of her dark eyes and a deepening blush.

"And—I shall be glad to come whenever I may do so, Lilith," he said, stooping and leaving a kiss upon her budding red lips.

"Must you really go by this evening's train?" she inquired.

"Yes, dear, for I must be in my seat when the house meets at noon to-morrow. There is business before the house in which I am deeply interested, and for which I have been working very hard."

"It is so sudden. I did not think you were going away so very soon," she said, regretfully.

"Did you not? But you surely knew, dear, that duty calls me to Washington."

"I ought to have known; but I did not reflect. I see now, of course."

"I have been absent from my seat five days. I must not stay away longer."

"I see—I know; it is very sudden, but it cannot be helped. Can I assist you in getting ready?"

"No, dear; there is nothing with which you need trouble yourself."

"Your valise?"

"It is packed, dear."

"Luncheon put up?"

"I shall not want any. Leaving Frosthill by the 6 P. M. express, I shall reach Washington by 9 A. M., time enough for breakfast. So, dear, all that I shall require will be a substantial tea before I leave home. Now I must go and speak to Fielding, and give him some instructions in regard to the management of the place during my absence," said Mr. Hereward, leaving the sitting-room to join the overseer, who was waiting for him in the office, at the end of the hall.

Lilith sent one of the young housemaids to call Nancy to her presence—Nancy, to whose duties of permanent seamstress and occasional nurse were added those of general housekeeping. The woman came in, wearing, as mourning for her late master, what she called a "solid" black calico dress, black shawl, apron and turban.

"Nancy, Mr. Hereward is to start for Washington by the evening train," said Lilith.

"An' take you 'long ob him?" inquired the woman.

"Oh, no, it would not be expedient under the circumstances."

"Wot saccumstanches?" demanded the woman, with the bluntness of an old and esteemed family servant.

"It would not be seemly that I, just married and in deep mourning for the death of our father, should go to a hotel in Washington, at the height of the gay season, where, as the wife of a prominent public man, I should be subjected to remark, whether I should go into company, or should rigorously seclude myself. You understand these things, Nancy."

"Fack, honey, I tell yer! Yer's right! Dis worl' is wery wicious! But ef yer can't go, wot he go for? Dat wot I want to know."

"Of course Mr. Hereward must return to his official duties. He cannot absent himself from them. And they will occupy him. He need not, and will not, enter into society, or be criticised for keeping out of it."

" 'Pears to me as ge'men can do jes' as dey pleases an' ladies can't. 'Deed it's de trufe!"

"Well, Nancy, I did not call you in to discuss this point, but to tell you that Mr. Hereward will leave here at five to catch the six o'clock train; so I wish you to see that the nicest and most substantial tea be ready for him at half-past four. I know I may trust it to you. Remember that he will travel all night."

"I'll 'member, Miss Lilith! I'll get young marse a staff ob life wot will prop him up till breakfas' time to-morrow mornin'; eben ef he had to walk all de way f'om Cloud Claps to Washin'ton! Le's see," she said, beginning to count on her fingers; "beefsteak—dat de bes' stan'-by ob all!—brile pattridge, poach eggs, rice cakes—"

And so muttering and counting she passed out of the room.

Lilith sat down and waited for the return of her husband, meditating whether she might ask him to let her go with him as far as the station and see him off.

Ah! for the unloved wife!

And yet she did not know that she was not loved. Tudor Hereward had asked her to give herself to him; therefore, of course, he must have loved her. This, without a thought or a question, she had taken for granted.

She had been useful and indispensable to the foster-father who had passed away. She had been the constant companion of his secluded life. She had walked and driven with him; and had read to him or sung his favorite songs, or talked with him over their favorite books in the evenings.

He had often told her how much he hoped that she would be to his son all and much more than ever she had been even to him. And he had praised that son, again and again, to such a high degree that Lilith had grown to believe him the very ideal of good, wise and heroic manhood, and to love, revere and worship him in her heart as a demi-god.

But then, the girl was very young, and entirely ignorant of the world and of life.

CHAPTER VIII

LILITH'S FATAL LEGACY

No, he had married her, therefore he loved her, and no doubt he suffered as much as she herself did in this trying separation; though he did not show it, being so much stronger and more self-controlled than she was.

So ran the current of her thoughts through the two hours that she awaited the return of her husband.

At length the interview with the overseer ended and Tudor Hereward entered the room, his ulster hanging over one arm and his valise in his hand.

He glanced at the clock over the mantel-piece, and said:

"It is half-past four and the sleigh is at the door, Lilith."

"And tea is ready, I know. I ordered it at this hour, and Cassy is always punctual," said Lilith, touching the bell.

"Bring in the tea immediately," she said to the boy that answered the summons.

And then as they walked into the dining-room, Lilith took heart to ask:

"Shall I go with you to the depot, Tudor?"

He turned and looked at her with surprise, and seeing the eager light in her dark eyes, he answered:

"Certainly, if you would like to go, Lilith, but it is not necessary, you know."

"I should like to go."

"Very well, then do so. But it is going to be a very cold night, my dear, and you will be very late getting home."

"I shall not mind that. I would rather go—unless—unless—I should—inconvenience you," she said, hesitatingly.

"Not in the least degree."

By this time they had reached the dining-room, where the table was set out with an appetizing tea-dinner.

She took her place at the head of the table and he sat down at the foot.

After she had helped him to everything in her reach, she beckoned Alick, who was waiting upon them, to come to her, and said:

"Go upstairs and ask Nancy to give you my fur-lined cloak, muff, hood, vail and gloves. Bring them down and leave them in the parlor, and then fill a bottle of hot water and put it in the bottom of the sleigh."

The man went on his errand and Lilith poured out a cup of tea and drank it.

Soon after this they arose from the table and went into the parlor, where Tudor Hereward encased himself in his ulster and sealskin cap and gloves, and Lilith wrapped herself in all her furs.

Then they went out and took their seats in the sleigh, that was well furnished with white bearskins, and driven by Stephen, who was as well defended from the freezing cold of the night as were his master and mistress.

The ground was very thickly covered with frozen snow, that beamed softly under the light of stars shining as they only shine on clear winter nights.

The sleigh flew on to the merry sound of silvery bells, down the larch-flanked avenue, and through the lodge gate, which Alick, sent in advance, held open.

"Good luck to yer, young marse an' mis'!" he said, taking off his hat and bowing as the sleigh flew on through the gate, over the frozen fields and through the woods until it reached the country road that led along the foot of the Cloud-Capped Cliffs, to the distant county seat and railway station at Frosthill.

"Are you quite warm enough, Lilith?" inquired Tudor Hereward, as he turned and carefully folded her fur circular over her chest, and drew up the bearskins closely around her lap.

"Oh, yes, I am quite comfortable, thank you, Tudor."

"It is a tremendous night! The wind in our faces cuts like a razor! Double your vail over your face, Lilith."

"Oh, indeed, I don't mind the cold! I am quite used to it! Don't you remember after the snow-storm of the fifteenth, how intensely cold it was?"

"Ah! I do remember. I was in Washington. The Potomac River froze over that night."

"Well, Major Hereward and I went sleigh-riding

every day, and we played at snow-balling after we came home!"

"You and my father!" exclaimed Mr. Hereward, turning around and looking at her with astonishment.

"Yes, indeed," she said, proudly.

"Snow-balling!"

"Oh, yes! we used to play snow-balling on the lawn every winter that I was at home as long as—as far back as—I can remember. Didn't you know that?"

"No, indeed I did not! I knew that you, on occasion, made yourself into a little old woman to adapt yourself to his tastes in his reading and other things; but —I had no idea that he ever became a boy to adapt himself to you!"

"Oh, indeed there was no question of youth or age between us! We were fast friends and good comrades in everything. I enjoyed reading his grave books as much as he did hearing them. And I know that he liked to sleigh and skate and play snow-ball just as well as I did! We were good comrades always!"

"It seems that I have much to learn of your life with my father, Lilith!"

"Oh, yes, and I shall like so much to tell you! For, of course, when you were at school and at college, you could not know how we were employing or amusing ourselves at home," she answered, simply.

The sleigh flew on with such speed that already the lights of the railway station gleamed before them in the distance.

In ten more minutes they were at the station, and only just in time, with not a minute to spare.

"Do not attempt to get out, Lilith. I shall have to make a rush for the ticket-office and then for the train. Good-bye, my dear! Take care of yourself! I shall write from Washington," he said, hurriedly leaving the sleigh, after he had carefully tucked the bear-skins around her, but—forgetting to kiss her.

She watched him yearningly as he ran across the open space and into the ticket-office. She saw him emerge in half a minute and jump on board the train, just as the huge monster snorted out of the station. She watched the train rush on until it was swallowed up by the forest on the horizon, and then she gave the order to her coachman to drive home.

Lilith felt disappointed, desolate and depressed as she entered her home.

Nancy opened the door and Lilith entered her chamber.

A roaring fire in the broad chimney-place lighted up the whole room, so that it needed no other light. A large, deep-cushioned easy-chair stood before the fire, with a footstool on the rug below it. Over the back of the chair hung a wadded silk wrapper, and on the footstool lay a pair of wadded velvet slippers.

"Come, set right down here now, an' le' me tak' off yer fings an' make yer right comfo'ble," said Nancy, seating her young mistress in the easy-chair and beginning to remove her outer garments.

"Thank you, thank you," exclaimed Lilith, when her dress had been changed for the warm, loose wrapper, and she was reposing at ease among her cushions.

"An' now le' me take off yer boots an' put dese warm slippers on yer feet. An' now, honey, sip yer hot mulled wine an' yer'll be all right!" concluded the woman, pouring the rich, spicy cordial from the pitcher into a cut-glass mug and handing it to the chilled girl.

"Oh, Nancy, dear heart, how good you are to me! How careful and considerate! Like a very mother! Nancy, did you know my parents?" gently inquired Lilith.

"Know um, honey? No, I didn't know um ob my own se'f. I nebber seed neider ob um in my life! But I heerd about um, arter dey was bofe gone to

glory, an' I nebber heerd nuffin but good about bofe ob um."

"Will you tell me what you heard, Nancy?"

"Well, it wasn't much, 'caze nobody knowed much ob um, 'caze dey lib so s'cluded, yer see. But wot I did hear was all good. Dey bofe was much 'spected. Dey 'longed to de church, an' I hope it was de right one, for deir sakes. Anyways, de parson t'ought a heap ob um, so de neighbors said. An' w'en de sexton went 'way Wes', to make a fortin, parson offered sexton's place to him, yer own fader, honey. But yer fader 'clined de office on 'count ob libin' near de grabeyard might hab a 'pressin' 'fect on de sperrits ob yer mudder, honey. So de neighbors said. An' dey t'ought how it was so noble ob yer po' fader to 'cline sich a easy place an' good pay jus' on 'count ob a nerbous 'oman's sperrits, w'en he had to work so hard at sich low wages for deir libbin', too."

The next morning a furious snow-storm was raging outside—nothing was to be seen but the whirling white flakes driven thickly against the windows. Lilith stepped out of bed, thrust her feet into slippers, her arms into the sleeves of her warm wadded wrapper, and went to the window to look out.

No, nothing to be seen but the wild whirl of snow.

At breakfast Nancy inquired:

"Does yer memorize as dis is Ole Christmas Day, Miss Lilith?"

"Yes, of course."

"An' yer was 'wited to a party at ole Missus Jordan's dis ebenin'?"

"Yes; but of course the family know what has happened."

"Couldn't help knowin'! But who'd 'a' t'ought it 'fo'hand? But dere, I ain't a-gwine to talk 'bout dat 'pressing subject. How yer gwine 'muse yerse'f to-

day, Miss Lilith? 'Deed I's feared yer'll be awful lonesome. Wot yer gwine do, anyway?"

"I shall look over the contents of a trunk which was brought away from my dear parents' home, after their death."

"Yer nebber see inter de inside ob dat trunk, Miss Lilith?"

"No, never. Did you, Nancy?"

"Hi, honey, I packed it myse'f, under de ole marster's 'rection, same day I went to Seawood to fetch you away. Law! wot a little, deliky slip ob a baby you was den!"

Leaving Nancy to clear away the table, Lilith went up two flights of stairs and reached the old-fashioned garret, that contained but one large room, which occupied the whole of that floor and was lighted by four large dormer windows—two on each side, and four other windows—two at each end. All the windows on the north and west sides were blockaded with snow. The garret was the receptacle for all the broken and disused furniture, boxes, barrels, rag-bags and trunks. It was the rubbish room, or "Chamber of Desolation," which every large homestead is bound to possess. Lilith soon discovered the trunk in question. Lying up against it—half concealing it—was an old spinning-wheel, a child's high chair and a reel. Lilith's first thought had been to open the trunk on the spot, but the intense cold of the garret seemed to penetrate to her heart, and her hands became numb and icy. The outside of the trunk, as well as all the rest of the articles in the garret, was covered with dust and cobwebs.

So upon the whole Lilith decided to go downstairs and send one of the men-servants up to brush the trunk and bring it down into her bedroom.

So she went below and gave directions to this effect, and then entered her chamber to await its arrival.

In a few minutes Alick came in, bringing the trunk on his strong shoulders. He set it down on the floor before his mistress, bowed respectfully and left the room.

Lilith drew the key from her pocket and arose and knelt down before the trunk—a very old-fashioned black hair trunk about three feet long by two broad and high, and with the owner's initials, J. W., in large brass-headed tacks.

It had been very thoroughly brushed, so that not a fibre of cobweb or a grain of dust was left on it.

Lilith, with an interest entirely free from any misgiving, put the key in the lock and tried to turn it. But the rusty lock at first resisted all her efforts. Oh, that the key had been broken in the ward, with no locksmith in the neighborhood to remedy the accident!

Had Major Hereward known what that discovery would be to Lilith he would have burned the trunk and its contents rather than that it should ever have fallen into Lilith's hands to blight her life, and he would have consigned Lilith herself to an asylum or left her to his son's charity rather than ever have made her his son's wife.

But in truth he neither knew nor suspected that there could be anything in that collection of memorials fraught with disaster or danger to Lilith. What could there have been, indeed? He had superintended the packing, locking and sealing of the trunk, with all its parcels of letters and papers intact, tied up as they had been left after the death of Lilith's mother. He would have thought it desecration to have disturbed them, and so, ignorantly and unconsciously, he left them to ruin the peace of his innocent and beloved daughter.

Lilith at length succeeded in turning the key in the harsh, rusty old lock, and raising the lid by its stiff hinges, with a feeling of pensive pleasure in the an-

ticipation of looking into the past life of her dear father and mother, and with no foreboding that she was on the brink of an appalling discovery.

CHAPTER IX

THE OVERSHADOWING PAST

A FAINT odor of embalming spices, which had nearly lost their strength, pervaded the interior. Lilith turned away her head from the sickly aroma to get a breath of purer air, and then she took off the coarse brown wrapping paper that lay over the contents, and exposed to view several thin muslin bags of sweet herbs and berries; a neatly-folded white muslin dress, which seemed to have been put away when quite new; a pair of white kid slippers wrapped in tissue paper; white kid gloves similarly done up; a small white paste-board box which, on being opened, was found to contain a spray of orange flowers and a set of white carnelian earrings and breast-pin.

Lilith took these out one by one, reverently pressing each article to her lips before she laid it down on the carpet.

Then she lifted another layer of brown paper and more thin spice bags, and found beneath them what seemed to be the Sunday clothes of a young workman: a coat and a pair of pantaloons of navy blue; a vest of white jeans and gloves of white doeskin—all of which, probably, formed the wedding suit of the young father; and must have been put away while still quite new.

She took off a third layer of brown paper and still more thin bags of spices, and revealed a sort of floor of books. These she began to take out and lay upon the

carpet—two pocket Bibles; two prayer-books; two hymnals, all well thumbed; a Pilgrim's Progress, Baxter's Saint's Rest, Medical Guide, Cook's Companion, and six volumes of Sherwood's Lady of the Manor.

She took the first Bible in her hand and turned to the fly-leaf to see if there were any writing on it. She found this, written in a very clear, fine hand: "Joseph Wyvil, Rockton, Yorkshire."

She kissed the name, her father's name, probably written by her father's hand. She laid aside the book and took up the second Bible, turned to the fly-leaf and read simply: "Elizabeth, from Joseph."

She laid aside this book also and took up the others in turn. Each and all bore the name of Joseph or of Elizabeth Wyvil, and sometimes the names of both, as when the book was the gift of one to the other.

The removal of the fourth layer of brown paper and spice bags discovered many parcels neatly tied up and arranged.

The first that Lilith laid her hands on proved to be a flat tin box, similar to those used by druggists to pack seidlitz powders. Lilith opened this and found two photographs in little frames. The top one represented a boy of perhaps seventeen years of age, in a sailor's suit, and having a curly head of hair, a fine open forehead, laughing eyes and a careless, joyous air.

Lilith smiled involuntarily into the laughing eyes, and gazed delightedly on the joyous face.

Then she took up the second photograph, a double picture representing a young man and young woman, standing with their hands clasped. The young man wore a dark dress coat and pantaloons and a white vest. The young woman wore a white dress and a spray of white flowers in her black hair.

"This," said Lilith, gazing fondly on the photograph, "must be a picture of my dear father and mother, taken on their wedding day! I must be the fac-simile

of what my dear little mother was on that day. Even I can see the likeness I bear to her. But my father! What a grand, grave, heroic face is his! It might be the face of the young St. John when he followed the Saviour to Mount Calvary! But I must have been mistaken in the identity of that bright, laughing-eyed boy. He never could have been my father, photographed at an earlier age, for his bright gypsy countenance never could have developed into this noble, saintly expression. And there is not in the two faces a single feature alike. There was no name on the boy's picture; let me see if there is any on this."

She slipped the picture card from out of its frame and read on its back, "Joseph and Elizabeth Wyvil."

"I was right. These are my parents, of course. The other—I do not know who the other could have been; some relation, I suppose, though he is not the least like either father or mother, but as different from both as it is possible for one human creature to be from another.

Lilith pressed the double picture to her heart and to her lips, and gazed at it long and fixedly, but not smilingly as into the smiling eyes of the boy's photograph.

Finally she returned both pictures to their box.

"My parents may have been poor, hard-working people, but they were pious, refined and intellectual. They certainly were! So much I have discovered so far! Now let me see what their letters will teach me of their inner—yes, and of their outer life! And whether they will tell me anything about this wild, handsome, harum-scarum boy," said Lilith, as she took the packets of old letters—four packets in all—from the bottom of the trunk.

These she placed upon a little stand, near her rocking-chair.

Then she carefully returned all the contents of the

trunk, arranging them in the order in which they had first been packed, shut and locked it, and dragged it away to the small adjoining room that opened from her chamber into the back of the hall, as the dressing-closet opened from Major Hereward's chamber into the front of the hall.

She closed the door, seated herself in the rocking-chair before the fire, and took up the packets of letters, one after another, to examine them. The correspondence seemed to cover a period of four years. Each packet was marked with the date of one year. She took up the first, untied it and scattered half a dozen letters over the table.

All these letters were old, the paper yellow with age, the ink faded with time. All bore foreign post-marks, as Gibraltar, Spezzia, Constantinople, Calcutta, Halifax, Baltimore, Rio Janeiro, Valparaiso.

They were all addressed to Mr. Joseph Wyvil, Rockton, Yorkshire, England.

Lilith looked at the greeting, and turned to the signature before reading the body of the letters. All began "Dear Coz," and ended "Your loving Jo."

Evidently these letters were all written by that jolly, rollicking sailor-boy, while on his long cruises, to his cousin, Joseph Wyvil. In reading the letters, Lilith came upon several descriptions of "larks" and "scrapes," into which the wild lad had been tempted and had fallen. None of them were vicious or criminal; many of them were practical jokes, all mischievous, some dangerous. How Lilith's heart went out to that wild sailor-boy, in spite of all his mad-cap pranks!

His letters were not long, never covering more than one sheet of note-paper, and there were no more than six in the first packet.

Lilith soon got through with them all, tied them up neatly, and then opened the second parcel. This, also,

contained but six letters written two years later, from another quarter of the globe, by the same "Jo," to the same Joseph Wyvil, and describing even madder "larks" and graver "scrapes" than ever before, and petitioning more earnestly that "Lil should not be told."

These, in like manner, Lilith read with interest, and, after reading, tied up with care.

She took up the third packet, which contained but four letters, written by "Jo": one to Mr. Joseph Wyvil and three to Mrs. Elizabeth Wyvil—evidently the "Lil" of the preceding years. But these letters were not from foreign ports. They were all post-marked on the outside, Carlisle, Cumberland, and dated on the inside from—

WHAT WAS THAT?

Lilith's glance was arrested by a single word—a word fraught with sin and sorrow. She gazed with dilated eyes and parted lips until every vestige of color died out from her face, leaving it with the ghastly pallor of death.

Sick and trembling with shame and fear, she began to read that fatal letter, and as she read, every thought and feeling were submerged in an overwhelming flood of horror and despair! She yielded to the deadly fascination of reading the three remaining letters, only to suffer the tortures of a lost soul as she learned the secret history of a sin, an expiation, a devotion and self-martyrdom forming a tragedy seldom equaled in terror, pathos and anguish! In a collapse of agony she threw her arms over the top of the little table, dropped her head upon it and groaned aloud. She could not shed a tear. But she lay bowed down and groaning, and sometimes wailing forth a word or a broken sentence that seemed to burst from her overcharged heart.

"Oh, merciful Father, if it be possible, take me from

this world now and here! Oh, I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it! The daughter of a—of a—oh, I cannot—cannot speak the shameful word!

"Major Hereward could never have known! No, he could never have known! Or he would never have allowed his son to marry me! Ah, why did he not look over those letters—those fatal letters? Then he would have known. Then he would not have wished to unite his son to such a deep dishonor as mine!

"Or, why had not my poor mother had the use of her speech in that dying hour, when she gave me into Major Hereward's charge, that she might have told him the truth? Oh, if I could go hence and be no more! Oh, what a future to face, if I must live!

"I ought to tell my husband! I ought not to keep anything from him! But how can I tell him? How can I expose my own grievous humiliation, and overwhelm him also with grief and mortification?

"Oh, if I knew what to do! If there were any of whom I could seek counsel! But I have no one! Not a friend in the world to whom I dare to tell this tale!"

Her head sank upon her breast. Then there flowed in upon her suffering spirit the memory of words that come like oil upon troubled waters—"Come unto Me."

She raised her face, with a new light upon it.

"Not a friend in the world! No, but above!—Above is the Friend of sinners! The Friend of sufferers as well! I will go to Him."

She sank down upon the floor, and with her head dropped on the seat of her chair, she bowed her spirit before Him who bids us to come and lay our burdens at His feet.

An hour later there came a knock at the chamber door. Nancy stood there with her arms full of hickory logs.

"I come to ax yer, Miss Lilith, ef yer didn't want some wood put on de fire. It's moughty cole, an'

snowin' an' blowin' wuss dan ebber. 'Deed, I reckon how all de roads'll be blocked 'fo' night, I do so. Hi, chile, wot yer let yer fire get so low fer? 'Deed, I calls it flyin' in de face. W'y didn' yer call me?" inquired the woman, as she went to the chimney-place and piled the logs on the smouldering brands.

When she had succeeded in raising a bright flame, she turned and looked at her mistress for the first time since entering the room. She was startled at the appearance of the young lady.

"Hi, Miss Lilith, wot de matter wid yer?" she demanded, in alarm.

"I am not well, Nancy."

"I can see dat much myse'f. You'se as pale as a ghose. An' tremblin' all ober like yer had an ager. An', I 'clare, yer fingers feels like frozen icicles," said the woman, unceremoniously taking her mistress' hand.

"Never mind. I shall be warmer presently, Nancy," said Lilith, as she sank again into her chair.

"I dunno 'bout dat. 'Taint on'y as yer cold; yer's sick all ober. I can see. Tell yer wot, Miss Lilith, yer gone and done two very imprudent fings. Las' night yer went t'rough all dat dreffful cole win' six miles away to de tepot long ob young marse. An 's ef dat warn't nuff to kill yer, now yer mus' go an' rummidge ober a ole trunk wot has been shet up for sixteen or sebenteen year. Now 'fess de trufe, Miss Lilith, warn't dat wot made yer sick?"

"The trunk had something to do with it. But never mind me, Nancy."

"Dar, I knowed it!" exclaimed the woman, ignoring the last clause in the young lady's reply. "I knowed it was de nasty fix air in dat ole trunk. I dunno wot de ole marse ebber had it pack up fer. 'Deed, doan I. I fink w'en people goes to glory, to be 'rayed in white rainbows an' goolden harps, deir yethly close—

wot ain't no better 'an filt'y rags 'pared to de hebbenly robes—ought to be 'stributed to de po', an' not be kep' for keepsakes, an' pack away in trunks to hol' fix air, to p'ison de fus one as opens it. 'Deed, I calls it flyin' in de face ob de word. I do so. Now, honey, dinner's mos' ready to go on de table. I gwine down to see it put on now."

"I do not want any dinner, thank you, Nancy."

"Not want any dinner? Well, I call dat flyin'—wuss flyin' dan t'oder. W'y, Miss Lilith, Aunt Cassy's made some ob de bessest chickun broff as ebber yer tasted."

"I really could not take any, Nancy."

"Umph! Humph! Dat nasty fix air in dat trunk! I knows how it is myse'f. W'y, honey, w'en I goes to unpack de winter fings in de fall ob de year, de fix air mos' knocks me down, an' gibs me a pain in my nose, w'ich 'fo' night sure to turn to a sick headache. An' dem on'y pack up fer fibe or six mont's. An' dis yere ole trunk ob yern pack up fo' sixteen or sebenteen years. An' yer to open it! I wish ole marse had burnt all de trash up 'fo' he ebber lef' it here."

"I almost wish so, too," burst involuntarily from the lips of Lilith.

"Fac' yer do, honey. An' in de right of it, too. Now look yere, chile, yer got to take somefin'. Yer mus'n' go 'dout eatin'. It's flyin', yer know. Now I gwine get yer a cup o 'tea an' a roun' ob toas'. Yer can eat dat w'en yer can't eat nuffin else. Can't yer now?"

"Yes, Nancy," replied Lilith, speaking rather to satisfy the woman than from any other motive.

As soon as Nancy had left the room Lilith gathered up all the venomed letters and held them over the fire, meaning to burn them; but then, with that strange reluctance which some people feel to burn even the most compromising and dangerous letters, she paused, hesi-

tated, and finally went and locked them in the memorial trunk.

In a short time Nancy came in with a fragrant cup of tea and a dainty round of toast, all served in fine china, on a little silver waiter.

She set this on the little marble-topped stand and coaxed Lilith to come and try to eat and drink.

And to satisfy her Lilith did so, Nancy watching jealously lest she should not do full justice to the repast.

"Feel better now, don't yer, young mist'ess?" said the woman, as she lifted the waiter with the empty china to take it away.

"Yes, thank you," replied Lilith.

"Ah! so much fer me makin' yer do it! Dunno wot yer'd do 'dout me to look arter yer. Yer'd be allers flyin'."

And with this valedictory Nancy left the room, taking the waiter with her.

Lilith paced slowly up and down the floor. She could not be still. Even the room seemed too confined for her.

She walked out into the hall and paced up and down its whole length. The doors of the little dressing-rooms at each end of the hall were open, and the front and back windows uncurtained, so that, turn in which direction she might, the whirling snow-storm met her view.

But the hall was icy cold. These remote old country houses may boast roaring wood fires in the open chimneys of the living-rooms during winter, but they have no furnaces, no registers, and so their vacant apartments and halls and passages are freezingly cold.

The icy air soon drove Lilith back to her chamber, where she sat hovering over the fire and congratulating herself upon one circumstance—that the snow-storm, and its sure result of blockaded country roads,

must prevent her well-meaning neighbors from coming to pay those duty visits of sympathy which are so very trying to grieved hearts.

"What a worthless life is mine! I ought to be doing something now; and here I sit idle. But what can I do? Something, certainly! I must try to find out what. Something to be of service to somebody, and to drive away the haunting thoughts of that dreadful past!"

"Miss Lilith, honey, there's a ge'man in de parlor wot axes to see yer, pertickalar."

It was again the voice of the colored attendant that broke upon the self-communings of the young lady.

"A gentleman, Nancy?" inquired Lilith, looking up with surprise.

"Yes, honey, a nice-lookin' ge'man as ebber I see!"

"In such a storm as this! What is his name, Nancy?"

"Wot is his name ag'in? Le's see now, wot is it ag'in? W'y, I dunno as he telled me, arter all! But I reckon as it's here on dis bit ob ticket, honey," said the woman, presenting a visiting card.

Lilith took it and read, "Mr. Alfred Ancillon."

"'Ancillon?' I don't know that name! I think I cannot see him, Nancy. Go and beg him to excuse me."

"Oh, Miss Lilith, honey! doan yer dis'p'int a wisiter as come t'rough all dis drefful storm to see yer! Doan do it, honey! It's flyin! 'Deed it is," said the woman.

Lilith also thought it would be almost too cruel to repulse a visitor who had braved such desperate weather to call at the house. Besides, he might be collecting for some charitable object. So, on the whole, she decided to see him.

"I will go down. Where have you left this gentleman, Nancy?"

"Inter de little parlor w'ere dere's a great big fire a-burnin'. Did yer fink as I was gwine to denounce

him into de cole drawin'-room to freeze to deaf w'ile he was waitin' fer yer? No, indeed, dat would 'a' been flyin'!"

"Go, Nancy, and tell the gentleman I will be down in a few minutes."

The woman left the room to deliver the message.

Lilith smoothed her curly black hair, changed her white flannel wrapper for a black bombazine dress trimmed with crape, and went downstairs.

She opened the door of the little parlor, her own usual sitting-room, and entered.

There was a gentleman dressed in black, standing with his back towards the door, looking through the opposite window upon the whirling snow-storm without. Lilith saw at a glance that he was of medium height, slender figure and graceful carriage, with a fine head of curling black hair.

As she crossed the room he turned to meet her, and she stood confronted with THE ORIGINAL OF THE SAILOR BOY'S PHOTOGRAPH!

CHAPTER X

A FAMILY CRANK

To explain the sudden advent of a stranger at Cloud-Capped Cliffs we must go back a day or two in time and mile or two in space. That is to say, we must go to the day after Major Hereward's funeral and to the manor-house known as Rushmore Lodge.

This Rushmore Lodge was a fine old place that had been for centuries in the possession of the Hilaries.

The last possessor had been a Mr. Rufus Hilary, who, having been crossed in love, forswore women and lived a bachelor until the age of ninety-seven, when he died, leaving the whole of his estate to his nephew

and namesake, young Rufus Hilary, the sole son of his only brother.

The latter had married late in life a young widow with several children, both boys and girls, and had died at an advanced age, leaving but the one son.

Rufus Hilary's mother was a woman with a strange proclivity for capturing and converting wealthy and confirmed old bachelors. This was her specialty, and as much so as it is the sparrow-hawk's to strike down the sparrow.

Her first husband, the father of all those boys and girls, had been a rich old bachelor, the senior partner in the great firm of Miles & Miles, Exporters of Tobacco, Baltimore.

Her second husband, the father of Rufus Hilary, had been another old bachelor.

And her present husband had been another and a more incorrigible old bachelor than all the others—a "slovenly, unhandsome" old bachelor, with bad manners, and a worse temper, who snarled at heaven and earth in general, and railed at women in particular as a most grievous, aggravating and deplorable afterthought of the Creator.

This amiable and attractive person was generally known in the neighborhood as "Old Jab," and his name was synonymous with everything that was weird, fearful and repulsive.

But, he was also known as Mr. Jabez Jordon, of Broad Manors, the wealthiest landed proprietor in the neighborhood, without a near relative in the world to inherit his estate, and the most intimate friend and dearest chum of the other old bachelor, Hilary, of Rushmore. And to hear those two aged sinners chant their daily duet in abuse of women and matrimony would have made the hair of a boy in love stand on end.

Old Mr. Hilary, as has been seen, lived and died in

the faith, or rather in the want of faith. And Old Jab was one of his pall-bearers.

It was at the funeral that Mrs. Hilary, a handsome matron of forty-eight, first met Mr. Jabez Jordon, of Broad Manors.

Now Mrs. Hilary had a large income from the interest on invested funds, but she had no capital, and no landed property.

Jordon, of Broad Manors, had both. He was as ugly as a Gorgon, and as ill-natured as a hyena. But what of that? The handsome bachelor-slayer marked him for her own, brought him down, and bagged him as easily as she had taken his predecessors.

All the neighbors wondered how on earth she had done it. No one knew but herself. She knew how she had done it, but she never told anybody.

She knew, also, how she had tamed her "horrid old hyena," made him keep clean, dress neatly, behave decently, and control his temper, so that whatever furies he got into abroad, or however bad language he might use to other people, he did not dare to show his teeth at home, or to utter one growl to his wife or her children.

Every one of the neighbors wondered at this change, and summed up their opinion in some such phrase as this:

"She's one of 'em. He don't dare to raise a fuss with her. Ah, he knows too well which side his bread is buttered on for that."

Immediately after this marriage young Rufus Hilary came of age, and entered into possession of his inheritance.

He had just left the University of Virginia, at Charlottesville, from which he had not graduated with honors, having been far more addicted to play than to work.

In taking possession of Rushmore he had deter-

mined to devote himself to amusement rather than to useful employment, and to get all the play out of every day that it was possible to obtain.

He found it lonesome at Rushmore, and so he begged his "gay and happy" mamma to bring her daughters (her other sons were in business in Richmond), and come and stay with him until he should "get used to the old castle," as he put it.

Mr. Jordon made not the slightest objection to his wife's leaving Broad Manors on this long visit to her son; nor, indeed, would it have been of the least consequence if he had. She would have gone just as soon.

So Mrs. Jordon and her two daughters went to Rushmore. And Old Jab had a good long interval of perfect free-agency, during which he enjoyed himself excessively in once more being as ugly and slovenly as he pleased, and in raging and storming up and down the house, swearing at the servants, kicking the cats and dogs, and putting all and sundry in mortal terror of their lives—as he had been accustomed to do in his free and happy bachelor days.

Mrs. Jordon and her two daughters, Harriet and Emily Miles, the former a handsome brunette of twenty-five years, and the fac-simile of her mother, and the latter a plump and pretty blonde of twenty-four, settled themselves at Rushmore for an indefinite time. They came just before Christmas, and had been there two weeks.

Old Jab had condescended to come and eat his Christmas dinner, and a week later his New Year's dinner, at Rushmore; but that was all.

He went away the day after New Year's, begging his wife to stay and enjoy herself as long as she could, and not by any means to shorten her visit; and he went home to make the lives of his household a bur-

den to them—like the hypocritical old catamount that he was.

After he was gone Rufus took his mother and sisters to the theatrical combination of tragedy and farce, by the Grand Plantagenet and Montmorencie Troupe, to which he had vainly tried to persuade Lilith to accompany him.

The success of the performance was so great that this world-renowned troupe—for whose coming the royalty, nobility and gentry of the world were waiting with the sickness of hope deferred—condescended to shine on benighted Frosthill for a whole week.

Young Rufus Hilary went every night. But his mother and sisters refrained on account of their neighbor, Major Hereward, who lay dead at Cloud Caps.

It was the morning after the funeral—the morning of the same day on which at evening Mr. Hereward had started on his return to Washington—that Rufus, at the breakfast table at Rushmore, suddenly announced:

"Mother, the Grand Plantagenet and Montmorencie Combination are going away by the midnight train tonight; so I have invited Mr. Ancillon to come home with me and stay all night and spend Sunday. Then he can travel Sunday night and overtake the troupe at Darkville, where they are to perform on Monday."

"What on earth are you talking of, Rufus? Who is it that you have invited here?"

"Mr. Alfred Ancillon, the leading gentleman in the Grand Plantagenet and Montmorencie Combination, you know! Mr. Alfred Ancillon, the illustrious tenor, the eminent tragedian and the celebrated comedian!"

"The strolling player, do you mean?"

"Oh, mother, how can you! He is the most wonderful genius in the world! And I have invited him to come home with me after the performance and take supper and stay over Sunday with us."

"Rufus, I have heard of your eccentric doings in bringing to the house all sorts of clowns and harlequins and acrobats. And this was strange enough even when you were keeping bachelor's hall here alone; but now that I and the girls are here—really, really, Rufus, I cannot put up with such doings!"

"But, mother, he is a gentleman! And such a world-wide celebrity that crowned heads are honored by his visits!"

"Oh, hush, Rufus, hush! You talk like a lunatic! He is nothing but a strolling player! To be sure, he acted Robin Roughhead in the farce very well, I thought. Kept me laughing all the time."

"I thought he sang divinely in Figaro," said Harriet Miles.

"And, oh, how thrillingly he played Richard! He really made my blood curdle in the tent scene!" added Emily.

"Why, of course he did! There is not his match for comedy, tragedy or opera in this world! And mammy, darling, I have asked him, and he has accepted, so he must come. I couldn't get out of it even if I wanted to, which I don't."

"Well, Rufus, the house is yours, and you must ask whom you please; but I beg that you will consult me while we stay here, before asking any other queer people to meet us."

"Yes, mother, I will. I do promise you I will, if you will only for this once be polite to Ancillon."

"I should be polite to any of your guests, Rufus,

'Howe'er unworthy of the name,'

as the great Sir Walter writes."

"Would you and the girls like to go to the performance to-night, mother?"

"No, the weather is too awful! We should all get the pleurisy and die!"

""All right; then I must go alone."

And so it was settled. Rufus went to Frosthill, which was only about a mile distant from Rushmore.

Mrs. Jordon gave orders for a sumptuous supper to be ready at eleven o'clock.

The two young ladies, full of eager curiosity to meet a celebrated actor off the stage, began to study careful toilets, so as to do honor to a distinguished guest. At a quarter before eleven the three ladies were seated in the drawing-room, waiting in state for the visitor, when the carriage rolled up to the door, and Rufus and his guest alighted, the former talking volubly. He led the new-comer noisily through the passage and up the stairs to his own room, calling on the servants to follow and wait on them. A little later Rufus came down again, accompanied by his new friend, whom he ushered with much ceremony into the drawing-room, where he presented him to his mother as the world-renowned dramatic artist, Mr. Alfred Ancillon.

"A poor player, madame, and no more, as you must know, if you have honored our humble efforts with your presence," said Mr. Ancillon, with a deprecating bow.

"I was very much pleased with your rendition of Robin Roughhead," replied Mrs. Jordon, whom the grace and beauty of the actor had already won.

"Thank you, madame."

"He is a gentleman. He does not say a short, impertinent, 'Thanks,'" thought the lady to herself.

Mrs. Jordon then introduced him to her daughters, who received him as some great personage, with flattering deference and timidity. Supper was soon announced, and the stranger, with an air of easy good breeding, bowed and gave his arm to Mrs. Jordon.

At supper the conversation, led by the lively Rufus,

never flagged for a single moment, but rang the changes on music, the drama, dramatic authors and actors, until at length Rufus burst out with:

"Oh, mother, I was so sorry that dear, pretty Lilith could not see Mr. Ancillon in any of his great parts!"

"Lilith! I beg pardon! Whom did you say?" inquired the guest.

"Lilith Wyvil, a lovely girl!—a neighbor of ours! Why, did you know her? You look so strange!" blurted out impulsive Rufus.

"No, of course not! But the name is so very unique," said Mr. Ancillon, instantly recovering himself.

"Yes, it is; and the story is stranger than the name," added Mrs. Jordon.

"A romance in real life, perhaps, madame," said the guest, in a very politely suggestive tone.

"Oh, yes, indeed; quite so. When we return to the drawing-room I will tell it to you if you would like to hear it. Some of your dramatic authors might make a play of it."

"I should feel greatly indebted to you, madame," replied the guest, bending his graceful head.

A little later, when they all arose from the table, Mr. Ancillon gave his arm to the elder lady and led her on in advance. Rufus followed.

In the drawing-room Mrs. Jordon sat beside Mr. Ancillon on the corner sofa, pouring into his listening ear the whole history of Lilith Wyvil's parentage, birth, orphanage, adoption by Major Hereward, as she had heard it through the gossip of the servants. She concluded by describing the death-bed marriage.

Here Rufus chimed in with:

"Yes; and he has gone off to Washington by the train to-night and left her alone at Cloud Caps."

"How do you know that, my dear?" inquired his mother.

"I saw him take the train when I was on my way to the theatre. I would not have left her so soon if I had been the happy man of her choice," said Rufus, ruefully.

The clock struck one.

"Come, my dear," said Mrs. Jordon, rising. "Our guest is tired, no doubt, and we will say good-night."

"Come, Ancillon! I will be your groom of the chambers and show you to your room," said Rufus, starting up.

The guest also arose, bowed gracefully as he bade good-night to the ladies, and then followed his leader from the room.

When left alone with his own reflections, Ancillon did not at once retire. Finally, as he threw off his clothes and flung himself on the bed, he muttered:

"I do not think I shall follow the Grand Plantagenet and Montmorencie Combination Troupe any farther on this route!"

CHAPTER XI

THE MYSTERY

Lilith remained for hours shut up alone with her mysterious visitor in the little parlor.

The stormy afternoon darkened towards evening; yet no sound came from the closed room.

Meanwhile, the idle negro women, gathered around the great kitchen fire, made their comments.

"Mos' pitch dark, an' she ain't rung for lights yet," said Cassy, the cook, as she took the kitchen lamp from the mantelpiece, lighted it, and set it on the side table.

"Well, wot ob it? Yer know Miss Lilif allers did like to sit by de firelight, 'fo' de lamps wer' lit," said Nancy.

"Yes; but not w'en dere was comp'ny. Allers had de light rung fur, sooner'n ebber den!"

"I reckon she'll ring present'y. Ef she don't I gwine to knock at de do', an' ax her doan she want de lamps fotch in. 'Deed is I!"

"Now, doan yer be so fresh, A'n' Nancy!" exclaimed little Cely, the housemaid.

"Wot yer mean, gal?"

"Didn' yer say as how Miss Lilif lubbed to sit in de dark firelight?"

"Yes, I did; but—"

"Mebby de young ge'man lub to sit in de dark firelight, too!"

Before the girl had well finished the sentence, a resounding box on the ear, from Nancy's strong palm, sent her tumbling off her stool on to the floor.

"Now den, yer sassy black nigger! Take dat! 'Ow dar' yer 'spatiate yer 'pertinent jokes 'bout yer young mist'ess and her wisiter? Miss Lilif ain't no young damson to be joked about sweethearts! Miss Lilif is a dig'ified married lady!"

"I didn' mean no jokes at all! An' yer've mos' broke my jaw-bone, yer have!" howled Cely, as she stumbled up from the floor and seated herself upon the stool again, holding her smarting cheek. "I on'y t'ought mebby more people 'side Miss Lilif like to sit in de dark firelight! I do, I know! an' I wasn' finkin' nuffin' 'bout no sweethearts! An' I'd 'a' said de same ef as how it had been a old 'oman 'long ob Miss Lilif 'stead ob a young ge'man! An' yer've guv me de jaw-ache, so yer have, A'n' Nancy!"

"Sarve yer right! Doan be so 'pertinent anoder time, den!" answered the unrelenting Nancy.

"Look yere! It's gwine on to seven o'clock. I gwine get supper. 'Deed is I. I won'er ef dat young ge'man gwine to stop to supper, 'caze ef he is, we'll hab to 'pare sumfin' extry," said the cook.

"Nebber yer mine, A'n' Cassy! Yer jes' frisky dat cole chicken an' toss up an omely, an' wid de cakes an' 'serves we's got on han', dey'll make good 'nough supper for any wisiter, ef he do stay, an' ef he don't, yer know nuffin' need to be los'! We dem can eat all dat comes f'om de table," said Nancy.

"Won'er who de worl' he is, anyhow? Doan yer know, Nancy?"

"No, A'n' Cassy, I don't! I reckon he's a stranger hereabouts. Moughty 'andsome young fellow, dough! 'Deed is he. Eyes as black as coals an' as bright as di'mon's, wid sich long curly lashes, makes one fink about de sparklin' water of dat spring in de hill, wid de high grass shadin' it, a-flashin' up in de sunshine! An' sich long curly black hair, chillun, almost like a purty young gal's. Oh, I tell yer he's han'some."

"An' yer dunno who he is?"

"No."

"Nor likewise 'spects?"

"No, I tell yer."

"He nebber gib his name?"

"No. He axed ef Mrs. Tudor Hereward was home. Which I telled him, in coorse my mist'ess was home, as she was like to be on sich a stormy day as dis. An' den he gib me a little w'ite ticket wid his name on it. An' I took it up an' 'suaded my young mist'ess to go down an' see him, 'caze I t'ought it was a pity not to see a wisiter who had come t'rough sich wedder as dis to wisit. An' he so han'some, too! But all de same, I wish to goodness gracious I hadn't 'suaded her, dat's all. 'Deed, I's gettin' right down oneasy in my mine, I is so."

"I doan won'er. It's a g'eat 'sponsability as yer've took on yerse'f, Nancy! an' de master not home neider. S'pose he's a highway bu'glar come to cut off all our heads an' burn down de house? 'Deed, I's gettin'

powerful scared. I wish Steve an' Alick would come home. W'ere is dem boys, anyhow?"

"W'y, A'n' Cassy, doan yer know as Steve went to de pos'-office an' ain't got back yet?" put in Mandy, the parlor-maid.

"No! an' I don't s'pose as he will get back t'rough all dis snow to-night. It would be a rist to 'tempt it. But w'ere is Alick?"

"Uncle Alick is in de stable, long o' one ob de carridge horses wot is berry bad."

"Blame dem boys! dey's allers out'n de way w'en wanted, an' in de way w'en not. 'Deed, Nancy, I wish yer hadn't let dat strange man inter de house."

"Now, A'n' Cassy, doan make me feel no wuss 'bout it 'an I do. You better get supper. Mandy, yer go inter de dinin'-room an' set de table. Cely, you come upstairs long o' me to put some wood on Miss Lilif's bedroom fire. I doan like to go upstairs arter dark by myse'f ebber since ole marse went to glory."

"Yer ain't afeard of ghoses, is yer, Nancy? leastways ob ole Marse Major's ghose; 'caze ef he's gone to glory, he ain't a-comin' down to dis dark, stormy worl' to-night."

"No, A'n' Cassy, I ain't 'feared ob seein' ghoses; I's feared o' bein' scared, dat's all. Come 'long, Cely. Le's get de wood fuss, dough."

Both women went through a back door leading from the kitchen to a sheltered wood-house, whence they soon emerged with their arms full of hickory and cedar logs which they proceeded to lug upstairs to the young mistress' bedroom.

"It's a-gwine to be a awfuller night dan it was las' night. On'y jes' hear dat win'. Yer go shet de windy shetters an' draw de curtains w'ile I puts de wood on de fire. 'Deed, I wish dat man'd g'lang 'way. I do so!" said Nancy.

Cely, busy with the window curtains, did not answer.

"Dough ef he do start out in dis storm to-night, ten to one he'll perish in de snow 'fo' mornin'. W'y doan yer answer me, gal?" inquired Nancy, standing up on the rug, and taking a long breath after her labor of piling the heavy logs on the fire. "W'y doan yer speak? Wot yer stan'in' dere mumchance fer?"

" 'Caze my jaw aches! Yer's jarred ebery toof in my head, yer has! An' I doan want to be knocked heels ober head ag'in, jes 'caze I open my mouf! I gwine keep my mouf shet w'en yer's about," grumbled the girl, who, having finished closing the windows, stood idly by the door.

"Po' gal! Ef yer can't stan' yer own dear A'n' Nancy—yer own dear mammy wot's gone to glory's own dear sister—chastisin' yer, gentle an' lubbin', an' all fer yer own good, yer better not marry Ole Jab Jordon's Seth, 'caze he's jes' like his ole marster! He'd knock yer 'bout till yer wouldn't hab a whole bone in yer body! Yer hear me, doan yer?"

Whether Cely heard or not, she did not choose to answer. Apparently she meant to keep her word, and hold her tongue.

"Dere! Dere's de young mist'ess' ring at last," exclaimed the woman, as the silver peal of Lilith's hand-bell sounded through the silent house. "I reckon she wants lights now. Run down an' light de lamps, Cely, w'ile I goes to answer de bell."

Cely flew down the stairs and into the kitchen on her errand, while Nancy, following slowly, reached the door of the little parlor and opened it. On one side of the fireplace, with his elbow on the mantelpiece, his handsome head leaning upon his hand, his black locks partly falling over both, and his dark eyes fixed on the floor, stood the young stranger. By the table, with her head bowed upon her bosom, her hands hanging down and clasped before her, stood Lilith, like a statue of despair.

"Yer rung de bell, Miss Lilif," said Nancy, by way of attracting the attention of the young lady, who seemed absorbed in her own thoughts.

"Yes," replied the latter, with an effort that sounded like a deep sigh; "yes. This gentleman remains here to-night. Have a fire kindled in Major Hereward's room, and prepare it for his occupation. Have supper on the table as soon as practicable."

"Very well, ma'am," replied the housekeeper, turning to leave the room, and meeting Cely at the door, with a lighted lamp in each hand.

She took them from the girl, placed one at each end of the mantelpiece, and finally withdrew, followed by Cely.

"Well, I beliebe as we is commanded in de Word to entertain strangers. I beliebe we is. But dis yere stranger—I—I has my doubts 'bout entertainin' ob him. An' de marster ob de house 'way, too. Dough, to be sure, it would nebber do to turn a dog out'n de house on sich a night as dis. An' he so handsome, too. But I doan like his stayin' here, 'deed I doan. An' people so ebil-minded. An' Miss Lilif so simple an' innocen'. 'Deed, I mus' try to 'vent de talk. 'Deed, I mus' dat," concluded Nancy, as she went into the kitchen to give orders.

And there, with the very best intentions that she could have had, she did the very worst thing that she could have done.

"Look yere, chillun," she said, addressing all the negroes in the kitchen, whose number was now increased by the presence of Stephen and Alick, who had come in during her absence. "Look yere. Dat strange ge'man is gwine to stay all night. 'Twon't do fer Christian people to let him go out sich a night as dis, eben ef he is a stranger, 'special' w'en de Word 'mands us all to entertain strangers. Leastways, I finks it does. But all de same yer mus'n', none ob yer,

go blabbin' to de neighbors 'bout dis young youth stayin' in de house, an' de marster not here, 'caze dey might fink ebil, an' talk ebil, too. An' yer wouldn' hab dat done to de ole fam'ly ob de Herewards, would yer?"

"No, A'n' Nancy. But wot is it? Wot yer mean?" inquired Stephen.

And all the other colored people looked the perplexity that they did not express.

"I means dis, doan yer see? I means as not one ob yer mus' so much as breave a w'isper outside ob dis house 'bout dis young youth bein' here to-night. Do yer hear me good?"

"Yes, A'n' Nancy. But w'y?" persisted Stephen.

" 'Caze ob ebil f'oughts an' ebil tongues. Dat's w'y."

"But wot fer?"

"Nebber yer mine wot fer, Steve. Yer all mus' take yer Bible oaf not to tell."

And so Nancy put every one of her fellow-servants on their honor not to mention to any living creature the fact of this stranger's presence in the house, thus filling their minds with all sorts of speculations.

"An' now, Steve, yer go right off an' kindle a fire in Marse Major's room. An', Mandy, fetch de big waiter to take in de supper."

Ten minutes later the bell rang.

"Will you come in to supper now?" inquired Lilith, in a low tone.

Without answering in words he left his place by the mantelpiece, bowed, and offered her his arm; all with a courtly grace the girl had never seen equaled.

She took his arm and walked with him to the hall, where Alick had just lighted the old-fashioned stained-glass hanging lamp, and down to the dining-room, which was in the rear of the little parlor.

There a great fire had been kindled, and an elegant

little supper-table had been arranged for two. Alick, who was waiting, drew back the chair at the head of the table and the stranger led the young lady to her place, and then took his seat opposite to her at the foot of the table.

"You may leave the room, Alick. If we need you I will ring," said the young mistress, when the footman had finished serving the dishes, and stood waiting behind his mistress' chair, and staring at the stranger seated opposite. The man obeyed rather slowly and reluctantly, and going outside, softly closed the door behind him, and then, kneeling cautiously down on the floor, placed his eye to the key-hole, and thus saw the graceful head and shoulders of the young stranger, who sat at the foot of the table nearest the door, with his back to the watcher; and at the head of the table, opposite to him, with her back to the fire, and with her face toward the door, the young mistress, whose pale face looked pallid in contrast to her black hair and mourning dress.

As he gazed he saw her put up her hands to her face, and shake as with a sudden chill.

Then he saw the young stranger lift his head as if about to speak, and Alick quickly changed his eye for his ear at the key-hole, and as the stranger guest sat so near the door, he could hear all he said.

And this is what he heard:

"Lilith, I have made you very miserable, my darling."

"His darling! Kingdom ob Egypt! his darling! an' he neider de husban' nor de brudder ob she!" thought Alick to himself, as his wool nearly uncurled itself to stand on end.

He listened for the young lady's reply, but not hearing it he shifted his ear for his eye, to see what she was doing.

She still sat covering her face with her hands, and

trembling all over her black-robed form. He sat leaning forward on the table, looking towards her, his almost girlish black curls flowing over his temples and forehead.

Lilith dropped her hands from her pallid face and met his look. Then the stranger began to speak, and Alick quickly shifted eye for ear again that he might listen.

"Lilith, dearest, do you not wish that I had never found you?" inquired the stranger, in a yearning, pathetic voice. "Do you not wish this, my Lilith?"

"His Lilif! Glory be to Moses?" thought the listener; and he listened eagerly for her reply.

"No, no, I do not wish it. I thank Heaven that you have come. I thank Heaven," fervently replied the young lady.

"She's all right, anyway, or she wouldn't talk 'bout t'ankin' Hebben!" thought the listener; and he listened more eagerly than ever.

"And yet I have brought you only sorrow, misery and embarrassment, my sweet—my sweetest child," said the stranger, in his pathetic voice.

"His sweet! Blamed be Judas Ask Harriet! Look yere, dough, I's asleep, I is, an' has got de night-horse or de staggeration ob de blood in de brain—dat's wot's de matter! Dis yere's a dream. Dreams is allers foolish fings, an' dis yere is de foolishest I ebber had," thought the perplexed negro to himself. But his ruminations were cut short by the soft, clear voice of his mistress. He bent his ear to listen more attentively to her words.

"If I could only tell my husband I should feel less unhappy. It is the keeping of a secret from him that troubles my conscience."

"But I have told you why this must be kept from him, as from all the world, Lilith. You would not betray me?"

"Oh! no, no! I would guard your secret with my life! Nay, indeed, I am guarding it with more, much more, than life!" wailed the girl.

"With your peace of mind, your hope of the future, your sacred honor! I know it, Lilith! And you know how absolutely necessary it is that my secret should be so guarded."

"Yes, I know! I know! And I will be true to the sacred trust."

"I am sure you will, Lilith, my most precious one; my angel!"

"His angel! Bress de Witch ob Windy's broomstick! But dar! I know I's asleep, so I won't fink nuffin' more 'bout it. On'y I do hope as I will hear wot dat secret is 'fo' I wakes up. 'Deed does I!" cogitated the negro man, as he once more applied his eye to the keyhole to view the interior.

Lilith had risen from her seat, and was advancing towards the door. The stranger stood up, turned and placed his hand on the knob. So sudden was the action that Alick had to speed away to prevent detection; and he burst into the kitchen with such a terrified air that the negroes started up.

Before they could ask an explanation the parlor bell rang, and Alick, whose business it was to answer it when in the house, started immediately to do so.

He found his young mistress and her visitor standing before the parlor fire.

"Alick, take a lamp and show this gentleman to his room—Major Hereward's room—and place yourself at his orders."

"Yes, ma'am. Your sarvint, sar!" respectfully answered the man, touching his forehead by way of salutation, and then taking one of the lamps from the mantelpiece, and leading the way to the foot of the stairs, followed by the stranger.

On showing the guest into that which was now the

best spare room, Alick became very communicative and confidential, while the visitor on his part inquired:

"What is your name, then, my heroic friend?"

"Alick, sar."

"Oh, Alexander! Well, Alexander the Great, I salute the hem of your majesty's garment, and I bid you *bon soir!*"

"Bones sore, young marse! At yer young youfful years, too! Dat mus' 'a' been traipsin' t'rough de snow!" exclaimed the negro.

"Very likely," laughed the young man.

"Le' me get yer some goose-grease, young marse!"

"Goose-grease be—melted! There's nothing the matter with me. Good-night."

"Oh! I t'ought yer said as how yer'd cotch de rheumatics, 'long o' coming so far t'rough de snow. Yer has come a long ways, hasn' yer, young marse?"

"Yes. Good-night."

"Yer mus' fink a heap o' Miss Lilif."

"I do. You can go. Good-night."

"Maybe yer's some kin to Miss Lilif. I fink I do see a likeness. I fink—Oh, Lor'!"

The stranger had started up, struck a stage attitude, and, pointing to the negro, with all the fury of all the ranters darkening on his frowning brow, flashing from his stormy eyes and thundering in his resonant voice, he bellowed forth at random:

"Be thou a goblin damned?
Avaunt and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!
Vamose the ranch! Skedaddle! Vanish!"

The man stood glaring with open eyes and mouth for one amazed moment, and then, with a—

"Lor' 'a' messy 'pon me, a po' mis'ble sinner!" he fled, stumbling out of the room and through the hall,

and finally tumbled down the back stairs, nearly at the risk of breaking his neck.

All the negroes in the kitchen rushed out of the door to see what was the matter.

They found Alick picking himself up and praying:

"Oh, Lor', spare my libe dis time an' I'll nebber do so no mo'!"

"Wot's de matter? Wot's de matter?" cried a chorus of voices from the negro group.

"Dat young youf upsta'rs is a raving mad lunacy. He's took awful! He called me a—goblet crammed! an' he cussed an' swore at me in—in some furrin langidge! He's dange'us! 'Deed he's werry dange'us!" howled Alick.

A shower of questions elicited no further intelligence, but only a repetition of the words.

"Whey's de young mist'ess? She ought to be tole," said Cassy.

"Oh, she's gone to bed, an' A'n' Nancy wid her to sleep in de trunk room," answered Cely.

"Den she mus'n' be 'sturbed, in coorse. But, tell yer wot to do, chillun! Ef dat man's c'azy we better wait an' see if he settles down an' goes to sleep, an' den creep up in de dark an' lock him in," suggested Cassy.

"Yes! dat's de fing! An' de key is on de outside ob de do' ebber sence old major went to glory," Alick said.

After a little whispering consultation this plan was adopted, and the negroes crept upstairs and lay in wait in the hall near the door till all was still in the house. Meanwhile the intended victim of this conspiracy, all unconscious of his impending captivity, immediately on the ignominious flight of the negro had thrown himself into his chair, fallen back and given vent to an uproarious peal of laughter, which was succeeded by another and another as if he could not stop himself.

And so the strange man, with a boyish elasticity of spirits, sprang lightly to his feet, threw off his clothes and flung himself into bed. As soon as his head touched the pillow he dropped asleep with the careless ease of boyhood. And he never even heard the click of the lock that made him a prisoner for the night.

CHAPTER XII

DANGER

Early in the morning it was discovered to be still snowing and blowing. Outside the kitchen door was found Old Isaac, the oldest negro on the plantation. He stood there with a heavy gray blanket wrapped all over his cloak and suit of clothes.

"W'y, Uncle Ike!" exclaimed Steve and Alick in a breath, and they began, and in a duet of eager words told him all they knew about the arrival of the stranger and also of his suspected lunacy and of his temporary confinement.

Soon Cassy the cook and Mandy the parlor-maid came down the back stairs to set about the morning meal. They greeted Old Isaac, and then Cassy, turning to Alick, said:

"I been listening at de do' ob dat strange ge'man, an' eberyt'ing is as quiet an' peaceable in dere as in any room in de house. So I jes' made free to unlock dat do' ag'in. 'Caze yer know ef dat ge'man fines hisse'f lock up dar, he mought raise a big fuss. An' de young mist'ess moughtent like it."

A few minutes later great fires were burning in the open chimneys of all the living-rooms in the old manor house, and an hour later the young mistress of the

establishment was seated with her guest at a cozy little breakfast table before the open fire of the dining-room. Alick had persuaded Steve to join him in waiting on the table, lest the supposed lunatic should become violent. But as soon as the coffee was served and all the several dishes in turn handed to the guest, whom Alick watched suspiciously, their mistress said:

"You may go now. If we need you I will ring." And they left the room.

Alick, making an excuse to look after the parlor fire, lingered in the hall until the coast was clear, and then kneeled softly down before the dining-room door and placed his ear to the keyhole.

And this is what he heard:

"Lilith, my precious, you must not urge me to stay. Every duty in life calls me away to-day."

"But you cannot go! Oh, indeed you cannot go! It is not I, but stern necessity, that would keep you here."

"It is 'stern necessity' that takes me hence, dear child."

"Ah! but one necessity may be sterner than another!" said Lilith, with a smile. "And it is the very sternest necessity that must keep you here. You do not know the danger of these mountain roads during snow-storms. All landmarks are covered, and men have been known to sink in the snow into deep chasms or ravines and perish there. You must not leave the house to-day—indeed you must not! You must not go! You might perish in the snow! Oh, indeed you might!" pleaded the young lady.

"And if I did. Would not that be the very best thing that could happen for you, my Lilith?"

"Oh, no, no, no! It would be one of the very worst! Oh, do not talk so! And do not think of going out to-day. Do not subject me to so great an anxiety; for if you should leave the house in this storm, I should not

know an hour's peace until I should hear of your safety; and how should I hear of it?"

"You do care for me, then, my child?"

"Care for you!"

"And yet you have not known me twenty-four hours."

"Ah! but I cared for you before I ever knew you! I have told you so. Oh! I felt my heart drawn to you when I first looked upon your picture, when I thought you were only a relation of my father's, before I knew how near you were, and how dear you would become to me!"

"And the story that I have told you has not repelled me from you?"

"Oh! no, no, but made you a thousand times dearer than before."

Footsteps were heard scuffling along the hall, and Alick arose hurriedly from his position.

"A'n' Cassy sent me to car' dese in," said Steve, as he came up with a plate of hot buckwheat cakes in his hand.

"Well, den, take 'em in. I done fix de parlor fire, and was jes' gwine back to de kitchen."

Steve opened the door to enter the dining-room, but his cakes were not needed. The young mistress and her guest had risen to leave the table. The two servants drew aside, and the lady and gentleman passed on to the parlor.

The stranger guest stayed all day, and all the next day, and the next. The roads were known to be impassable. No one came to the house, and it was certain that no one could leave it.

Under ordinary circumstances no evil could be expected to come from the accidental presence of a storm-bound stranger in a lonely country house.

But in this case, where the mistress of the house was youthful and beautiful, and, in the temporary

absence of her husband, living quite alone, except for the attendance of colored servants, and where "the stranger within the gates" was young and handsome, and admitted to the daily companionship of the hostess, then indeed, though angels might have smiled at all their interviews, mortals would wonder, speculate and misjudge.

No one misjudged so much as stupid black Alick. By watching and listening at every opportunity that he got, he learned enough to excite the most serious suspicions in his own benighted mind, but not enough to allay them. He finally came to the deadly conclusion that his mistress and her guest were falling in love with each other, and his soul was fearfully exercised thereby.

On the afternoon of Friday, Lilith, in her anxiety to hear from her husband, called up Alick and proposed that he should take one of the strong, sure-footed mules and try to reach the post-office. But she warned him not to attempt to proceed if he should find the road perilously obstructed.

The man accordingly got ready for his "Arctic Expedition," as the stranger guest called it, and at one o'clock set out on mule-back for Frosthill.

Alick found the roads as bad as they possibly could be not to be utterly impassable. He reached the village post-office at about three o'clock.

There was no one on duty but a boy thirteen years old, the son of the postmaster, who unlocked the bag and filled it with about half a dozen letters and as many newspapers for Cloud-Capped Cliffs. Finally he locked the bag and returned it to the messenger.

"Marse Tom, is yer busy?" inquired the negro, lifting a well-filled basket from the floor to the counter.

"No, and shan't be until the mail comes in," replied the boy.

"Here's a bag o' nuts from our Eng'ish wa'nut tree.

An' here's a dozen ob de bigges' apples as ebber growed at Cloud Caps! I gib 'em all to yer, ef yer'll hab charity to yite one little letter for a po' color' man as can't do it for hisse'f. Will yer now, Marse Tom?" pleaded Alick.

"Of course I will! That's not much trouble, and I would do it for nothing, willingly," replied the good-natured boy, taking a sheet of note-paper from a pile and preparing to set about the task.

" 'Rect it to de Hon'able Mr. Tudor Hereward, Esquire, Member ob Washington City."

"Cloud-Capped Cliffs, January 13th, 18—.

"My Honored Marster: W'ich I wouldn't 'sume to take de liberty, ef de case wasn't eminent. W'ich yer's wanted home immediate. W'ich dere's a han'some 'sinivatin' young youf a-stayin' in de house fo' dese fibe days, an' a-meanin' to keep on a-stayin' in de house, the Lor' on'y knows how long; an' no one to keep his company but de young mist'ess. An' he a-takin' up all her time. W'ich we dem colored people don't 'prove ob de like in de marster's absence.

"Yer 'bedient sarvint to command,

"Allesander Turnbull."

The young scribe sealed the letter, and had put a stamp on it and popped that firebrand into the mail.

CHAPTER XIII

PARTING

Supper was over at Cloud-Capped Cliffs, and a fine fire burned in the open chimney of Lilith's parlor. In easy-chairs, on each side of the table, before the fire,

sat the young mistress of the house and her storm-bound guest when the door opened, and in walked Alick, in his big black ulster, who laid a mail bag on the table before his mistress. Lilith said:

"You may go now, Alick, and get your supper and get warm."

The man ducked his head and went out, and Lilith handed four letters to her guest, laid a pile of magazines and newspapers on the table between them, and then asked:

"Will you excuse me while I open these letters from Mr. Hereward?"

The stranger bowed and smiled, and began to unseal his own epistles.

Lilith looked at the dates of hers, and opened the earliest.

It was written by her husband immediately after his arrival in Washington, and it described his night journey and his arrival at the capital in the morning, just in time to escape the blockade of the road by the snow-storm that had commenced at dawn.

He begged her to answer his letter by return mail, and to tell him how she had got home on that terribly cold night when she had insisted on riding with him to the railway station, and whether she had taken any harm from the exposure.

This letter had evidently been lying in the Frosthill post-office ever since its arrival, five days before.

Lilith laid it aside with a sigh, and opened the second letter.

This was of later date, and expressed much anxiety to hear from her; much fear that she was ill from having taken cold, since he had received no letters; and yet a forlorn hope that it might be only on account of the blockaded country roads that all correspondence seemed cut off between them; but begging that

as soon as this letter should reach her she should answer it by the first mail.

"I will answer both these before I sleep to-night, and Alick shall take my letter to the post-office in time for the first mail to-morrow," said Lilith to herself, after she had read them over and over again, dwelling fondly on any expression of interest or affection they contained for herself.

She slipped them into her pocket and looked up at her guest.

He had finished reading his correspondence, and was sitting with his elbow on the table, his head resting on his hand, his fine dark curls straying over forehead and fingers, and his dark eyes fixed on her with a pensive gaze.

"What is it, dear? Dear, what is it?" anxiously inquired Lilith.

"Nothing child. Never mind my moods. Have you good news from your husband?"

"Oh, yes, thank Heaven! He is quite well and very busy."

"I am glad to hear that. And when I am far away from you it will make me happy to remember how happily you are married."

"Oh, yes! I am! I am! So much more happily than I ever expected or deserved to be. But why do you speak of the time when you shall be far away? I hate to think of it. We are so contented now."

"But, my sweet child, I must leave you to-morrow morning."

"But why?"

"My letters really call me away—every one of them, and each is more urgent than its predecessor."

"I wish I had not written to the postmaster to send your letters as well as mine since they take you from me. But why should you obey the call?"

The stranger broke into one of his rare, sweet laughs, and answered:

"Because, dear, the Grand Plantagenet and Montmorencie Combination are due at Staunton on Monday morning, to open on Monday evening with the tragedy of Othello, the opera of Lucia, and the roaring farce of Toodles, and the world-renowned tragedian, tenor and comedian, Mr. Alfred Ancillon, is announced for the rôles of the Moor of Venice, Edgar Ravenswood, and Toodles. Don't you see?"

"Yes, I see. Oh, what versatility of talent you must have! If you are not 'world-renowned,' you ought to be," said Lilith.

"That is just my opinion of myself," replied the stranger, with a laugh. "And just the opinion that Stubbs & Smith (Messrs. Plantagenet and Montmorencie) are trying to impress upon the minds of a benighted public. And now, dearest, I must bid you good-night. You look pale and weary. You must go to rest."

And so saying the stranger guest arose, tenderly kissed his young hostess, and left the room.

Lilith also arose, stirred the fire, turned up the light of the lamp, cleared a place on the table, and sat down to answer her husband's two letters in one.

She told him how glad she had been to get his two letters at once; how anxious she had been to hear from him; how entirely all travel had been impeded on the country roads, and how impossible it had been to send to the post-office until that day. She assured him she had taken no harm from exposure on the night when she had accompanied him to the railway station; that she was quite well, and that everything was going on well at home, except the temporary inconvenience caused by the snow blockade.

Then Lilith hesitated. She did not know how to introduce the subject of a stranger's sojourn under the

roof. She was pledged to keep that stranger's secret. By every law of duty she was bound to keep it. Yet, how could she write truthfully of his visit and not betray his secret?

She made several attempts. She wrote:

"A traveler sought shelter here from the storm on the day after you left, and he has been snow-bound ever since; but he will try to proceed on his journey to-morrow morning."

"No," she said, after reading these lines over, "that will not do; it is not true. He was not driven in here by the storm. He came to see me, in spite of the storm."

Then she tore up that page and tried again:

"A Mr. Alfred Ancillon—"

"No, that will not do either. That is not true either —his name is not Alfred Ancillon. Oh, dear! what shall I do! It seems to me so wrong, so criminal, to conceal this strange visit from the knowledge of my husband, and yet how can I write one truthful word about it without betraying him? And I am vowed not to do that. I will write nothing about it. That is the only course I can take without either writing an untruth or breaking my oath of secrecy and ruining him, and making Tudor and myself miserable for life."

Yet Lilith sat long with her elbows on the table and her bowed head held between the palms of her hands, as she gazed vacantly on the letter before her, ere she could resolve to close it without telling of this momentous visit.

"Oh, I am morbid over this! I make more of the difficulty than it really is. This visit, so significant to me, is little or nothing to any one else. It is only the

secret, that, if known, would make all concerned as wretched as it has made me. I will say nothing, since I cannot tell all about it. A partial disclosure would be insincere, dangerous and suspicious. I will say not one word about it. In a day he will be gone; in a week he will be forgotten by all save me. And so the cloud will pass without breaking."

With these words Lilith once more addressed herself to her task, and finished and closed up her letter without once alluding in the slightest degree to her strange visitor. Then she rang the bell that summoned the two men-servants to shut up the house, cover the fires and put out the lights.

When Alick and Steve came in, she said:

"One of you must be ready to ride to Frosthill to post letters early to-morrow morning. You may settle it between you which is to go."

Then she took her wax taper which Steve had brought in and went up to her room, where Nancy was waiting to attend to her wants. An hour later the tired little brain and heart forgot all care and trouble in healthful sleep. Very early the next morning the household was astir. The sun was shining; the wind was still; the air mild with the January thaw. The young mistress of the house and her guest met at the breakfast table.

"I will have to trouble you, my dear, to lend me a horse to take me to the railway station," he said, as soon as Alick had left the room.

"Then you will go this morning?" sighed Lilith.

"No, not will, but must," he amended.

"At what hour do you wish to leave?"

"In time to secure the ten o'clock express."

"Then you will have to leave here at eight, and it is half-past seven now," she said, as she rang a bell.

"Who is getting ready to go to the post-office?" she inquired of Alick when he answered the summons.

"Steve, mist'ess."

"Then tell him to wait. He will have to attend Mr. Ancillon. And tell him to saddle Salidon, for Mr. Ancillon's use."

"Yes, mist'ess," replied the negro. "Tank de Lord, dat young youf's goin' at las'," he chuckled to himself as he left the room to give the orders.

Lilith and her guest arose from the table and went together into the little parlor.

"How shall I hear from you when you are away?" she inquired, anxiously.

"I hardly know how, my dearest one. But be sure I will find some safe way of communicating with you," he answered, confidently.

"But you will be very cautious, for your own sake and for mine and—his?" she pleaded, earnestly.

"Cautious? My child, I have graduated in cautiousness; I have taken a high degree in cautiousness! I am a Master of Cautiousness! A Doctor of Cautiousness! If I were not I should not be here now to tell you the tale. Fear nothing for me. I am an 'old soldier.'"

While he spoke he was pulling on his riding coat and drawing on his gloves.

"Always let me know if I can do anything to please you. You will, won't you?"

"Yes, dear. Be sure of it. It is hardly possible that you, defended and sheltered from all the storms of life as you are, should ever need my poor services; but if you should, be sure that you will have them—through life, and unto death!"

"Oh, give me some address to which I may write to you. I cannot bear that you should leave me, and leave no clue behind."

"Let me see. You take the New York *Pursuivant*?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then watch the personal columns—and—use them when necessary."

"Yes, I will."

"There are the horses, actually neighing with childish impatience to be off. They have been in stall so long, I suppose. And it is really time to go. Dearest dear, good-bye! I thank and bless Heaven that I have seen you, to know you so well! to find you so good! so altogether lovely! Good-bye, my beautiful! my beloved!"

He strained her to his bosom, pressed his lips to hers, released her and hurried from the room. Lilith sank down in her chair and burst into a paroxysm of sobs and tears.

Then suddenly she sprang up, with a great effort controlled her emotion, and went to the door to catch, if possible, the last glimpse of her late guest before he should disappear in the belt of woods that surrounded the house. He was indeed near that bourne, but before entering it he drew the bridle of the powerful black horse he rode, wheeled him around and looked towards the house. Lilith waved her handkerchief. He kissed his hand, threw her the air kiss, wheeled his horse again and was gone.

Then Lilith returned to her parlor, sank down in her chair, dropped her head upon the table, and prayed for help and light and strength to take her safely on her dark and rugged way.

A little later she went upstairs in the aimless sort of manner of one who misses something and cannot settle herself at anything. She went into the room lately occupied by the stranger. It was now in perfect order, and Nancy stood by the neatly-made-up white bed, sorting out some linen that had come in from the wash, and that for convenience she had laid upon the top.

"Look yere, young mist'ess, yere's de ole Marse

Major's shirts an' han'chiefs an' fings, wot yer told me to len' to dat young youf wot was wedder-bound yere widout no change ob clothes," said the woman, who scarcely raised her eyes from her work.

"Very well, Nancy, if they are sufficiently aired put them away in the proper places," said Lilith, indifferently.

" 'Tain't dat, honey. I knows well 'nough wot to do wid wot's yere. But see yere, honey! Dat young ge'man has wored away a whole suit ob ole Marse Major's underclothes—shirt an' undershirt an' socks an' all. An' he's done lef' a whole suit ob his own yere. Wot we gwine do 'bout it?"

"Nothing at all. It is not of the least consequence. Put them all away together."

"Jes' as yer say, Miss Lilif; on'y I t'ought I would tell yer," replied the woman, who proceeded to place the linen on the shelves of the late master's wardrobe.

"Better not stay in dis cole room, Miss Lilif. Alick done let de fire go down, an' yer might get cole," said Nancy, when she had finished her task and locked up the wardrobe, and was about to leave the place.

Lilith, who was really shivering either from cold or nervousness, or both, went out and passed into her own bed-chamber, where a good fire was burning.

She had scarcely seated herself in her cushioned armchair before Nancy, who had followed her, said:

"Miss Lilif, I don't want to 'larm yer, but I fink somebody had better see inter wot ails Alick; 'deed I do."

"Is Alick ill? But he cannot be. He seemed well enough at breakfast time."

"Maybe yer didn' notice him much, young mist'ess. An' maybe he was 'havin' himse'f befo' de stranger; an' I dunno wedder yer'd call it ill, young mist'ess; but I beliebe dat nigger's gwine crazy."

"But why should you think so? And how long have you thought so?"

" 'Caze ebber since las' night, when he come f'om de pos'-office, he has carried on like anybody deluded out of his head. 'Deed, it's de trufe."

"But in what way? What does he say? What does he do?"

"I can't hardly tell yer, Miss Lilif. He's fell all de way down de stairs twice dis week; an' it is on my mine as he mought hab hurt his brain-pan an' put hisse'f out'n his senses."

Nancy did not confess the dreadful truth, that on the last occasion of Alick's rapid downward descent of the stairs she herself had assisted it by knocking him heels over head, and that she had ever since been tortured by conscience.

"But you have not told me yet in what manner Alick shows his mental derangement. And I suspect it is only your own fancy after all," said Lilith.

"No, it ain't, honey. Now yer shall judge. I can hardly tell yer wot de po' critter would be at. But dis is de way he goes on. Las' night he come inter de kitchen shakin' his head an' mutterin' to hisse'f, an' sayin'—jes' as if he didn' see any ob us cullud people 'roun', w'ich I beliebe he didn'. 'Deed, it's de trufe."

"What did he say?"

"He say, 'Wot made me go do dat dar fing? 'Spose dere was murder done froo it? Wot made me go an' do it? It wor de debil! 'Deed it wor de debil! I nebber would 'a' done sich a dredfull fing of my own 'cord."

"Now, young mist'ess, I don't mean to say as dem war zactly his own words; but wot he did say war to dat defect. An' ebber so much more ob it. So den at las' I say, 'Alick,' I say, 'wot de name o' sense has yer been an' gone an' done?' I say. An' he say, 'Nuffin'.'

But, 'deed, I's feared he's deluded out'n his head, Miss Lilif."

"Perhaps he has been drinking," suggested the young mistress.

"Well, now, 'haps he has. But I nebber smell nuffin' offen his breaf. But maybe dat is it. Maybe he got some ob dat rank p'ison cheap w'iskey, wot dey sells to de po' ign'ant cullud men, w'en he went to de pos'-office yes'day. An' ef I fines out dat is so, won't I make him rue de day, dat's all!"

And Nancy stirred the fire, settled the folds of the curtains at the windows, and finally left the room.

Lilith finally sent for John Fielding, the overseer of the plantation, and requested him to look after Alick with great care, and promptly report any evil symptoms he might discover. The manager promised to do his best. Two days later he came to the lady and said:

"I think the man has something on his mind. He has been doing something that troubles his conscience. He seems to dread discovery and punishment, or some other painful consequences. But I cannot induce him to confide in me, nor can I gain the slightest clue to the nature of his fault."

"I do not believe the man to be capable of committing any serious offence; I really do not," replied the lady.

"He thinks he has. He thinks he has committed some crime little less than murder; and he is frightened nearly to death at what may be the consequences. He lays the blame on the devil."

"I know it. But, Mr. Fielding, the poor creature may be a monomaniac on the subject. I have read that monomaniacs sometimes accuse themselves of crimes they never could have committed."

"Yes, ma'am, so I have heard, too. And such may

be the case with this negro. Something should be done at once."

"What can we do?"

"Perhaps you might send him away for a time. Change of scene might help him."

"No, I would not like to send him out of our own care in his present state of mind, or during Mr. Hereward's absence. Besides, though he may be a lunatic, he is certainly a very harmless one as yet. I will write to Mr. Hereward and ask his counsel. Continue to watch the man, if you please, and let me know if you find any change."

CHAPTER XIV

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

When Tudor Hereward bade good-bye to his child-wife on that freezing night at the little Frosthill Railway Station, and settled himself in his seat in the crowded car, his thoughts went back to the sweet, shy, tender girl he had just left, rather than forward to the great political problems that must soon engage all the powers of his mind in Washington.

It is strange, but true, that though Lilith had grown up in his father's house, and had been led to look up to Tudor Hereward as to a superior being, whom she grew to love with all the fervor of her innocent child heart—yet he had taken very little notice of her, scarcely any more, indeed, than if she had been one of the colored children about the place. When she was a child he was a school-boy at the Jefferson Academy; when she was a half-grown girl, with a governess at home, he was away at Harvard University; and when he graduated with the highest honors he went to Europe for a year's travel; when he finally returned home to enter upon the political career that

most, of all others, attracted him, Lilith was away finishing her education at Vassar College.

On reaching Washington the passengers left the train in a driving, blinding and confusing snow-storm that obliterated platform, depot, crowds, carriages—everything from view. Leaving the train they were speedily covered all over with flakes. They were as a flock of white phantoms coming through a white tempest to a white city.

Tudor Hereward tightened his ulster about him, threw his rugs over his left arm, took his valise in his right hand, and strode off towards Pennsylvania Avenue and his hotel.

As soon as he had taken his bath and his breakfast he sat down in his little room, at the very top of the building, to write to Lilith.

He was already anxious to hear from her. He feared that she might have taken cold on that freezing night when she drove with him to the depot—and colds were often dangerous and sometimes fatal. People in finest health take cold and die of pneumonia with awful suddenness, he remembered.

He was very anxious lest that lovely little face should vanish forever from his view, notwithstanding that it did not belong to "the wife he had dreamed of."

So he cleared a corner of the overloaded table, and sat down to write to Lilith, to tell her of his own safe arrival, to express his fears for her health and well-being, to beg her to answer his letter by return mail, and, above all, to take good care of herself.

Then he paused, pen in hand, before writing his signature. He wished to be kind as well as to be truthful. Finally he signed himself her "Faithful Husband."

He had scarcely settled himself in his seat in the

House, and the business of the day had not yet commenced, when one of the pages brought him a card. He glanced at it and changed color. It bore the name of "Miss Von Kirschberg."

Under the name was written: "Begs to see Mr. Hereward for five minutes only."

Tudor Hereward hesitated. He did not wish to see Leda Von Kirschberg. Soul and body shrank from the meeting. Yet what could he do? The hereditary chivalric deference to woman that had descended through an hundred sires obliged him to accede to her request.

"Where is this lady? In the reception-room?" he inquired of the page.

"No, sir; in the library," replied the boy.

Mr. Hereward arose and went thither. He glanced up and down the room, saw the chief librarian at his desk, and two or three assistants going to and fro to put up or take down books from the shelves, and perhaps a half a dozen individuals scattered about at the various tables; and at last he saw a lady seated in a distant nook, and instantly recognized her as Leda Von Kirschberg.

"I will be the first to welcome you back, Mr. Hereward," she said, slipping her daintily-gloved hand from her sable muff and putting it in his.

"I thank you, Miss Von Kirschberg. Pray resume your seat."

She sank upon the sofa and said:

"You are surprised that I should have known of your arrival?"

"Somewhat, since I only came in by the early morning train," he answered, deferentially.

"Sit down, Mr. Hereward, and I will tell you why one lady came out in this storm. Tudor," she said, dropping her voice and changing color, "I have been very unhappy since our bitter parting on New Year's Eve."

"I am very sorry to hear you say so, Miss Von Kirschberg."

"Ah, do not speak so coldly! You would not if you knew what I have come here to say to you."

Coldly! It required all his power to control the fever of emotion into which her presence threw him.

"Tudor," she whispered, in a low and tender tone, while the rose deepened to crimson on her oval cheeks, "Tudor, on that New Year's Eve you told me that you loved me, that your whole life's happiness depended on my love."

"It was not the least serious mistake of my life, Miss Von Kirschberg."

"Ah, no, Tudor! You do not know. It was not a mistake. It was the voice of truth and destiny that asked me to become your wife."

"And you answered that you were the promised wife of another man," he replied, icily, trying to avoid the fair, radiant face whose smile had still the power to thrill him to the soul.

"A man old enough to be my grandfather—a man to whom I never should have been bound by a betrothal at which even you laughed in scorn."

"In the bitterness of disappointment rather. But let that pass. You very properly held such a betrothal, once made, forever sacred."

"I did until after the agony of our parting on that bitter night. Immediately after you left me I left the ball. I went home, so infinitely desolate in the thought that all was over between us, that we could never again meet as we had met, never again be anything, even friends, to each other, that I wished to die. Then a desperate remedy occurred to me—to write to my betrothed. And before I slept that night I wrote to Mr. Bruyin and told him the truth. It was his due. And I appealed to his generosity for my release."

"Leda! Leda!" he exclaimed, in hoarse, guttural tones.

She saw his strong emotion, and she misunderstood it, of course.

She smiled her radiant, bewildering smile, and continued:

"Mr. Bruyin generously released me. He could not do otherwise. My father also agreed to the dissolution of the betrothal. He could refuse nothing to his only child. And thus I am free, free, Tudor!"

"Leda! Leda!" he breathed, in a tone almost inaudible in its deep pain.

"This overwhelms you, my friend! Ah, you did not believe in the love that you sought," she said, joyously, still misapprehending his emotion. "Well, I was free. I never went out, or received a call, until I was free. Then I went out on the chance of meeting you; but I could see you nowhere."

"I had left the city," he murmured.

"Yes, so I heard at last. So I might have learned earlier, had I not isolated myself so much and been so deeply absorbed in the one anxiety as to neglect the newspapers. It was only on the evening of the fifth day that, having missed seeing you in the House, I asked my father what had become of you. He told me that you had been called home on some business, he had forgotten what, but thought you would be back soon. The next day I went to the ladies' gallery of the House, and I have been there every day since, knowing that the first and surest place to find you after your return would be at your post of duty. To-day, as soon as I saw you come in, I sent you my card that you might come to me at once before the serious business of the day should commence. And so, Tudor, the question you asked me on New Year's Eve I can answer now truly, happily. Tudor, take the gift you asked for then."

Hereward had a great struggle to overcome his emotions, and to speak calmly the words that the case called for. His pierced and rebellious heart cried out within, "Too late! Too late!" But his pale lips, that shook under his fair mustache, said coldly, yet very deferentially:

"I am very sorry that you have told me all this, Miss Von Kirschberg. I tried to arrest the story, but had no power to do so. I beg now that you will pardon me for having heard it, and to believe that I will try to speedily forget it."

"But why? Why do you speak so, Tudor?" she inquired, in alarm. "Do you not understand, Tudor? I tell you I am free—free!"

"I am married," he replied, without looking up.

She stared wildly at him, while all color and expression fled from her radiant, blooming face, leaving it still and white as marble.

"It cannot be true! It is a poor jest for you. You were not thinking of marriage a week ago, except with me. You were proposing to me. You have had no time since that to seek a wife. Oh, say that you were jesting with me!" she pleaded.

"I can but say what is true. I can but repeat that I am married."

The proud woman, who had humbled her pride in vain, tried to sustain her dignity under this final blow, but failed. Tudor Hereward saw her lips grow white and her head sink, and he hastened to bring her a glass of water. She bowed her thanks, drank it and returned the empty glass, which he set down upon the nearest table.

"Had not this painful interview best terminate now, Miss Von Kirschberg?" he inquired, with deferential interest.

She made a great effort to rally her strength, and, ignoring his question, said:

"This marriage seems to have been a very sudden one."

"Very sudden," he assented.

"And—who—was—the bride?" she inquired, speaking with some difficulty.

"My father's adopted daughter. But this cannot interest you, Miss Von Kirschberg."

"No, it cannot, indeed. And you do not love her."

"Pardon me, Miss Von Kirschberg; but surely this, also, need not concern you."

"It need not in the least degree. But, poor girl! she is much to be pitied, for she is likely to be very unhappy."

"I shall endeavor to prevent that, and to make my child-wife quite content."

" 'Child-wife!' Ah, that explains everything. No woman with any knowledge of her own heart would take a man so suddenly. But she will be a woman some of these days, and a woman very much to be pitied."

"I cannot see why. I shall try to make her happy."

"A woman is never happy unless she is loved, and most unhappy if she be married and unloved," said Leda Von Kirschberg.

Then rising, with more calm dignity than her previous disturbance could have promised, she said:

"Mr. Hereward, I am detaining you from important duties."

He bowed profoundly and withdrew from the library.

CHAPTER XV

WARNING

From that most agitating interview in the Congressional Library, Tudor Hereward went to his seat in the House of Representatives.

He found the needed quorum there at last. The members, who had probably been delayed by the snowstorm and the over-crowded and impeded street cars, were at last in their seats, and the affairs of the nation were in full blast.

It was late that night before the House adjourned, and the young statesman walked from the Capitol through the still driving storm to that den at the top of the hotel which, for the want of a better, he called home. He was utterly wearied, yet triumphant, for his bill had passed, though by a small majority.

He sat down in his disordered room; his writing-table piled up with unanswered letters; his waste-basket overflowing with letters never to be answered.

He found upon his table, in addition to all the letters he had laid aside to answer, a dozen or so of new ones that had come in during the day, and had been brought to his room and left on his table by the hotel porter.

He sat long into the night, his head bent over his work, his pen flying over the paper.

At length, when outraged nature could bear no more, though half the letters waited to be answered, he leaned back in his chair and took out his watch to see if there were yet time enough to ring and order up a sandwich and a cup of tea.

Five o'clock! And so swiftly had time passed in his deep absorption that he had not thought it later than two. Five o'clock! The house had been closed for

hours. The stormy winter day had not yet dawned. He was nearly prostrated through working and fasting. It was impossible to get anything to eat, but he could rest. He slowly and wearily drew off his clothes, turned off his gas, and went to bed. But he was too tired and excited to sleep.

"If I could only afford the help of a private secretary, this wear and tear of mind and body need not go on," he said; "but that is a luxury that must not be thought of at present. What terrible weather! I hope my little girl caught no cold. I hope she is comfortable in that barn-like old manor house. She must be very, very lonesome, poor child. Not a soul in the house with her except the colored servants. And no possibility of visiting or receiving visits in such weather as this. It must be very trying for her, so soon after our heavy bereavement, too. I half wish I had brought her here with me. Yet in what respect would she have been better off? She knows no one here. And in her deep mourning she could not even have gone out to the public receptions. And what company should I be to her, absent at the Capitol all day long, and bending over my writing-table all night? Besides, she would hinder my work. Yet, poor little girl! it cannot be helped. She must stay and mope where she is, and I must stay and toil at my post."

At length, toward seven o'clock in the morning, when the first faint dawn of the dark winter day stole through the one window of his room, thoughts became confused with dreams, and the wearied brain and troubled heart found rest in sleep.

This day was the type of many days that followed—the forenoon spent in committee-rooms, the afternoon and evening in the Hall of Representatives, and more than half the night in his dreary and disorderly room, engaged in preparing speeches, and writing and answering letters.

Only on one occasion did Hereward appear in public, and then only as a matter of duty.

Once in the course of the season it obliged him to attend the President's reception.

It was on the first Friday evening after his return to Washington.

Conspicuous among all the ladies, both by her majestic beauty and magnificent toilet, was the famous heiress, Leda Von Kirschberg.

Tudor Hereward felt her presence through every fibre of his frame, even before he saw her face.

She was leaning on the arm of a very decrepit old gentleman, who was not her father, but a much older and very much richer man, understood to be Mr. Nicholas Bruyin, the happy bridegroom-expectant of the handsome heiress.

Tudor Hereward heard all this in the low hum of voices; but as the ill-assorted pair drew near him, he turned and lost himself in the crowd in the opposite direction.

He could not behold her face or hear her voice without the strongest emotion, even though now he distrusted her more than ever. How came she to be here on the arm of her old lover if she had really broken with him, as she had said?

Was the aged billionaire doting as well as decrepit, that he had become her suppliant after such a rupture? Had she no self-respect that she yielded to his solicitations and reinstated him in his vacated position?

Or—degrading suspicion!—had she never broken with her old lover at all, and never intended to break with him until she should be sure of an engagement with Tudor Hereward? Did she think it best to reverse the old proverb, and act upon the most politic if not the most honorable plan, and be sure to be on with the new love before she was off with the old?

Appearances looked exceedingly like it, thought Hereward, as he watched her from a distance, distrusting her thoroughly, yet thrilling at every glance of her eyes, or tone of her voice. The sight of Leda Von Kirschberg had so disturbed him that, having already paid his respects to the President and his circle, he withdrew from the crowded rooms, and returned to his den in the top of the hotel, and sat down to his writing-table to work half the night; for on the next day he would have to address the House on the subject of the tariff.

That night was the last in which he ever saw Leda Von Kirschberg. When next he met her she bore another name.

The snow-storm was succeeded by sunny, spring-like days.

Hereward's great speech on the tariff has passed into history, and need not be further mentioned here.

When he returned to his hotel on Saturday night, he went first into the reading-room to look at the evening papers.

One of the first items that met his glance was this "Personal":

"Mr. and Miss Von Kirschberg, accompanied by Mr. Nicholas Bruyin, left Washington this morning by an early train for New York. The marriage of Miss Von Kirschberg and Mr. Nicholas Bruyin, announced some ten days ago, is to be celebrated at the Cathedral in New York on Tuesday next. After which the newly-married pair will sail on the fine steamer Kaiser Wilhelm for Bremen, on a visit to the bridegroom's relatives in Germany. They expect to visit Vienna, London and Paris, but to be in Rome for the Carnival."

Before Hereward left his chamber the next morning his mail was brought to him by the hotel messenger,

who had taken it, together with all letters for the house, out of the post-office—there was no delivery on the Sabbath. Hereward sat down to the table, not to read or answer all those letters then, but to pass them through his hands and see whether there was any one from Lilith, on whose account he was growing very anxious; for he had not heard from her since he had left home. He looked through the whole parcel without finding any letter directed in Lilith's handwriting. But just as he was about to put the whole pile aside, his glance happened to fall on an ill-directed envelope bearing the postmark of Frosthill. He took it up.

AND ALICK'S FIREBRAND WAS IN HIS HANDS.

CHAPTER XVI

LILITH'S LONELINESS

THROUGH all the dreary week that followed the departure of her mysterious guest, Lilith moped in utter solitude—except for the attendance of her colored servants.

When the storm was past and the great January thaw set in, the country roads were even in a worse condition than before.

The 15th of January, though it was in mid-winter, was a bright, lovely, summer-like day.

Lilith, glad to greet the sunshine and warmth, went out after breakfast to walk up and down on the long front porch.

Presently a carriage appeared, coming around the sweep of the avenue, and soon drew up before the house.

Three ladies got out in turn, whom Lilith recognized as they appeared—first, Mrs. Jabez Jordon, wrapped in a costly India shawl, wearing a black velvet bonnet and carrying a South Sea otter muff; secondly, her elder daughter, Miss Harriet Miles; and thirdly, her younger one, Miss Emily Miles.

Smiling and holding out her hands, Lilith exclaimed, sincerely:

"I am so glad to see you all! Oh, I do thank you so much for coming!"

"We should have come before, my dear, if the weather and the roads had permitted," said Mrs. Jordon, as she received the girl's welcoming kiss.

"Oh, I know! I know! No one could come out under such circumstances. But now you have come to spend the day with me, haven't you? And you will let me send your carriage around to the stables, will you not?" eagerly questioned Lilith, addressing the elder lady, between the kisses she was bestowing on the younger ones as she drew them up the steps.

"Yes, we have come to spend the day," said Mrs. Jordon. "Jed," she added, looking back over her shoulder to the coachman, "put the horses up, and mind that you rub them down well."

The coachman touched his hat and drove off towards the stables.

"The state of the roads has kept everybody away. Even Ru's stage guests. You should see some of the oddities Ru brings to the house," said the younger Miss Miles.

"What sort of people are they?" inquired Lilith.

"Why, all sorts of people. Last autumn, when the circus was at Frosthill, he brought the clown to spend Sunday and stay overnight. Two weeks after that he brought the living skeleton. He brings all sorts of people, except respectable people, my dear," said the younger Miss Miles.

"Oh, Emily!" cried the elder sister, "you cannot say that Mr. Alfred Ancillon was not respectable! He was more than respectable! Mrs. Hereward," she said, turning from her sister and addressing her hostess, "this gentleman is one of the most accomplished men I have ever met in my life! He spent a day and night with us on the week before last."

Mrs. Jordon put in her word:

"Yes," she said. "Although professionally nothing better than a strolling player, Mr. Alfred Ancillon was really a very gifted, cultured and gentlemanly person, but looking, for all his youth and his irrepressible gayety, as if he had passed through the fire at some period of his life. He interested me very much; and as for Harriet there," she added, nodding towards her elder daughter—"well, all I have to say now is just this, that I am glad the young fellow went away when he did. And well as I liked him, I hope he will never come back; for I want no love-sick girls in my family!"

"How can you, mamma!" exclaimed the elder Miss Miles, with an indignant blush.

"Pooh, pooh! my child, you are flesh and blood like other people, for all your dignity," laughed jolly Mrs. Jordon. "But now let the subject of this strolling player drop. I did not come here to talk of him. I came here for a purpose, which is strengthened by all I see. Lilith, my little angel, I came this morning to carry you home with us this evening to Rushmore, to spend a week."

Lilith's pensive face brightened at the prospect; but she had some doubts about the expediency of accepting her kind neighbor's invitation.

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Jordon, I thank you so very, very much, indeed I do! I should like to go so very much. But—I am not sure that it would be quite right for me to leave home just now, so soon after—after—our great loss, and in the absence of my husband, too. I

beg pardon, but would it? Please tell me yourself—not what you and I wish, for you want to have me, and I want to go, oh, so very much!—but what you think, when you reflect upon it, is right and proper for me to do," said Lilith, earnestly.

"My child, it is perfectly right and proper for you to accept my invitation and come to me for a visit. If it had not been so, do you suppose I should have asked you?" questioned the lady.

"No, of course not. I should have remembered that! I beg your pardon, Mrs. Jordon," said Lilith, ingenuously.

"Nonsense, my dear! There! Go and see to your preparations."

"My preparations are soon made. I shall not be gone more than fifteen minutes," replied Lilith, as she smiled, nodded, and left the room.

She ran up to her own chamber and called Nancy and told her of the intended visit.

"An' I am right down glad to hear ob it, Miss Lilif! dat I am! You's been moped mos' to deaf here by your lone se'f! Now, wot yer want me put up for yer?" inquired the woman.

Lilith told her and added:

"You can get them all into the valise, Nancy."

Then she gave her housekeeper a few instructions and cautions for her conduct and care of the house during the next week:

In conclusion she said:

"And if there should be any serious change in Alick's condition send and inform me at once."

The remainder of the day passed very pleasantly, and after an early tea the whole party set out to drive to Rushmore.

The moon was at its full that night, and the roads were in good condition. So the drive from Cloud-

Capped Cliffs to Rushmore Lodge was a very pleasant one.

Two hours of rather slow, because very cautious, driving brought the party to Rushmore Lodge, an old-fashioned, oblong building of red brick, with upper and lower piazzas running all around the house, which was standing in the midst of heavily-wooded grounds.

"Where is your master?" inquired Mrs. Jordon of the servant, as she led her party into the warm and bright interior.

"Marse Ru's gone to de show, ma'am; but he lef' his complimen's an' say how not to set up for him, 'caze he 'spec's he'll be late," replied the man, as he followed his mistress and her party into the parlor, and took up the tongs to mend the fire.

" 'Show?' What show?" demanded the lady.

"I—I dunno, mist'ess, indeed! But it is some show or rudder, I know."

"That's lucid," laughed Mrs. Jordon, as she laid off her bonnet and shawl and invited her young guest to do the same.

Then they all dropped into the easiest chairs and sofas near the fire, with that enjoyment of luxurious rest which follows a long drive.

And after awhile the crochet and embroidery were taken up, and light work and lighter chat went on until ten o'clock, when Mrs. Jordon had refreshments brought in—hot mulled port wine and pound cake.

When they had dispatched these good things and sent away the service, the domestics were called in for evening prayers, after which the party prepared to separate for the night.

"Jupe," said Mrs. Jordon to the old man-servant who had come in to cover up the fire and put out the lights, "I think you had better keep up the fire and bring in something in the shape of supper for your master, who may return cold and hungry. Mrs. Here-

ward, I will take you to your room," said the hostess, drawing Lilith's arm within her own and leading her out of the parlor.

They went up a broad flight of stairs to the upper hall, upon which several doors on either side opened.

"Those," said Mrs. Jordon, pointing to a row of four doors on the left as they went up the hall, "are the chambers reserved for Hilary and his bachelor friends. These," she continued, pointing to a similar row on the right, "are sacred to me, my girls, and our visitors. Here, my dear, is yours, the first one we come to; the next is the girls', and the farthest off, the front one, is mine."

Saying this, Mrs. Jordon opened the door before which they stood and ushered Lilith into her bedchamber.

Old Persian rugs lay about the room wherever they were most needed—as before the fire, beside the bed, and below the dressing bureau.

A broadly-smiling young negro girl stood by the washstand, showing in her attitude and expression how glad she was to see company, and how eager she felt to make herself useful.

"Here is Soph. She will wait on you, my dear, and you will find her a docile little maid, if not a very bright one," said Mrs. Jordon.

"I should think Soph very, very bright indeed," answered Lilith, looking kindly on the smiling lips and laughing eyes of her new attendant.

Finally the hostess went all over the room to see that her guest had everything she needed, and then she and her daughters, who had followed her, kissed Lilith good-night and left her.

Lilith prepared for bed.

"I need not detain you, Sophy," she said to her new maid.

"Den I's feared yer doan like me, mist'ess, 's well as

I do you," replied the girl, in a grieved and disappointed tone.

"Oh, yes, I do, Sophy. I like you very much indeed," said the young lady, smiling on the girl.

"Well, den, mist'ess, w'y woan yer let me take down yer ha'r an' bresh it, an' pull off yer shoes an' stockin's, an' yub yer feet, like Suke does fer de ole mist'ess, and Sal does fer de young mississes?" said Soph, in a complaining tone.

Lilith laughed as she understood the situation.

Here was a young, inexperienced girl, proud of her promotion to the position of a lady's maid, and anxious to be trusted with all the duties of her office, even to those most menial services which the self-indulgence of the other ladies required of their maids.

Lilith was too good-natured to disappoint the girl.

"Oh, yes; certainly you shall do all this for me if you will be so kind. It is late, and I did not wish to keep you up; that is all, child," she said, as she dropped into a low-backed chair, and let down all her curly black hair, and put it at her little maid's mercy.

Arming herself with a stiff brush, which she took from the bureau, and muttering to herself that—"Nuffin' wasn't no trouble, an' she did like to set up late, 'special now w'en she would be 'feared to go downsta'rs in de dark by herse'f, 'fo' Suke an' Sal come out'n de yudder yooms to go 'long ob her," she commenced experimenting on Lilith's silky black tresses.

Lilith had rather expected to be tortured, but she was agreeably disappointed.

Then she sat down and drew off the young lady's shoes and stockings and insisted on "yubbing" her feet. It was while she was engaged in this work that she suddenly broke out with:

"I hope Marse Ru won't fetch none ob dem dere hobgobs yere, mist'ess."

"Hobgobs?" repeated Lilith, questioningly.

"Yes, mist'ess, shows, an' sarcusses, an' fings! Ebery time dey come to de town ober yander Marse Ru 'wites 'em yere an' entertains 'em jes' 's if dey was p'esiden's an' gen'als an' fings. Ole mist'ess doan 'probe ob it, an' no mo' doan we-dem cullud people."

"There, Sophy! There are your friends coming," said Lilith, glad to stop the girl from gossip without hurting her rather sensitive feelings.

"Oh, my! Dey mus'n' go downsta'rs an' leabe me to fin' my way in the dark!" cried Soph, unceremoniously going to the door, opening it and calling to her two giggling fellow-servants:

"Come in yere an' wait fo' me. I ain't got t'rough wid my lady yet. I doan hurry t'rough my work an' 'lect my ladies, I doan!"

Glad of an excuse to come in and see a new face, the two maids entered, still giggling, courtesied, and stood respectfully just inside the closed door.

Lilith smiled and nodded to them, while Soph proudly went about the chamber picking up and putting away her new mistress' effects.

At last even Soph herself was satisfied to confess her services complete, for the time being.

She courtesied good-night to her new lady, joined her companions and left the room.

Lilith locked the door after them, turned down her light and went to bed.

Few people can go to sleep at once in a strange bed. Lilith could not. It was not care that kept her awake, not even care concerning that terrible family secret which had come to her knowledge through reading the old letters; for the disclosures of her mysterious visitor—even while his presence filled her with intense anxiety—had taken the venomed sting out of that old horror.

At length Lilith dropped into a sound sleep, from which she did not awake until morning.

Then, indeed, she was shocked from her slumber with a vengeance.

A rumbling and tumbling noise, as if the whole house was falling over her head, accompanied by a succession of piercing screams, wrenched her so rudely and suddenly from the land of dreams, that when she found herself she was standing in the middle of the floor, instinctively, blindly getting into her dressing-gown, while the piercing screams continued to split the air.

In another instant Lilith had torn open her chamber door and burst out into the hall, breathlessly demanding:

"What is the matter? Oh, what is the matter? Who is hurt? Is any one killed?"

While outside the other bedroom doors stood other members of the family—Mrs. Jordon and her two daughters, all in their hastily put on wrappers, and Mr. Rufus Hilary, in his blue dressing-gown, and with his red hair on end, and all in the highest state of terror and excitement, demanding, as with one voice:

"What on earth is the matter? What is it? What has happened? Is the house on fire? Has murder been done?"

CHAPTER XVII

"FOREGATHERED WI' THE DE'IL"

THE shrieks continued without an instant's intermission.

"It is downstairs—whatever it is! Rufus Hilary, why don't you run and see?" cried Mrs. Jordon, shivering with cold in the bleak hall.

"I'll bet anything in this world that it is nothing but those idiotic negro girls! There! you see, they have

stopped yowling now! Of course it was those fools! Frightened at Heliogabolas, I reckon," said Mr. Hilary, as his pug nose and freckled face grew red with annoyance.

"Helio—who? What? Is that another new dog you have been buying, Rufus?"

"It's not a dog, mother. It's Heliogabolas! That is to say, the name in full is Kadmus Heliogabolas Arminicus, the tattooed giant, one of the greatest wonders in this world! I brought him home with me last night after you had all gone to bed."

"And I suppose the wretched maids, coming upstairs to their duties, met this tattooed giant coming down and took him for the devil, and no wonder!" angrily exclaimed Mrs. Jordon.

"Yes! That's it! That's the row! Now, don't be frightened; there's no harm done! I'll go down as soon as ever I'm dressed. By Jove!"

This last objurgation was called forth and uttered resentfully at the sudden sight of Lilith, who still stood just inside her chamber door, but whom Rufus, in his excitement, had not chanced to notice until this moment. He shot back into his bedroom and banged to the door.

As soon as her son had vanished from the scene, Mrs. Jordon went to her guest and said, apologetically:

"My dear Mrs. Hereward, I am so mortified that you should have been disturbed in this reprehensible manner, on this very first morning of your visit. What must you think of us? But, my love, ever since Rufus Hilary came into possession here, this place has been 'Headlong Hall;' no better! And he brought one of his monstrosities home with him last night, as you have just heard, and terrified the poor negro girls out of their wits. Ah! If I were in authority here I'd

soon 'show' these show people that this manor house is not a common caravansary!"

"Oh, please," began Lilith, as soon as she could put in a word—"please don't mind me. Bless you! I like it all! I think it very amusing! I do, indeed! And just think what fun it will be to have the—what is he? —the tattooed Arminian giant in the house with us! Perhaps at the breakfast table with us. Will he breakfast with us, Mrs. Jordon?"

"Oh, I dare say, my dear. Breakfast with us, dine with us, sup with us, stay all night with us, and live with us as long as he pleases, for aught I know to the contrary," exclaimed the highly provoked woman.

"Quite right! We shall find a great deal of amusement in him," said Lilith, with a gay little nod, as she re-entered her bedroom and closed the door.

She found the room warm enough to dress in. The great fire of heavy hickory logs had kept up all night, though the bright blaze had long subsided to a dull, red glow.

Lilith replenished it from a box of pine kindlings in the corner, raised a cheerful blaze, and then began to make her morning toilet.

It was very well that she could dispense with the attendance of a maid; for all Mrs. Jordon's peremptory tintinnabulations were utterly unproductive of maid-servants from below.

At last that lady dressed herself in the cold and hurried downstairs in heat.

In her haste she ran against old Jupe, the butler, who was crossing the hall at the foot of the stairs with a large waiter of china, which he was taking into the dining-room to set the breakfast table. Jupe reeled and then recovered himself amid the jingling of the tea-cups, without serious damage to his nerves, or other remark than—

"Lor'-a-messy upon me!"

"Where are the maid-servants? Where is Sally? Where is Sukey? Where is Sophie? Where is everybody? Why don't someone answer my bell? Why have the maids not come up to make the fires? And what has been the reason of all this hullabaloo downstairs? Can't you answer me? Leave off staring and speak, you idiot! It was the man from the show that frightened the maids, I suppose?"

"Yes, mist'ess, in coorse it wer him—dat dere speckled an' striped an' spotted giant. He did it! He scarified dem po' chillun inter fits! An' 'nough to do it, too! I seen him, mist'ess—a great, tall, broad man, wid a big head, an' his face, an' his neck, an' his arms, an' his legs, 'low de knees, all de bright colors ob de rainbow—blue, an' yallor, an' red, an' green! Wid a great w'ite turban big as a wash-tub on his head, an' a great black beard, much as free or fo' hosses' tails, hangin' from de middle ob his face to de middle ob his body! An' he dress' so funny. I nebber could 'scribe it! all loose w'ite trousers, an' star-spangle' banners, an' scarfs, an' silver dollars. He wer a sight to behold, mist'ess! I seen him, mist'ess, jes' as he wer a-comin' down an' dem free misfortinit gals was a-goin' up. An' nex' fing all free ob 'em opened deir wide moufs an' screamed fit to split de roof offen de house, an' tumbled heels ober head all de way down de stairs an' lay kickin' an' screechin' dere, all mix' up togedder so yer couldn' tell one f'om t'oder, or heads f'om foots!"

"And what did that monster do when he saw the mischief he had caused?"

"Nuffin'. Jes' stalk' right ober dem as if dey had been so much dirt under his feet, an' stalk right out'n de f'ont do', w'ich happen to be open, 'caze I war jes' shakin' de mats out—leastways I had been a-doin' so."

"And what did you do?"

"I went to dem chillun an' picked 'em all up offen de flo' an' tried to make 'em unnerstan' as dere was nuffin' 't all to be afeared ob. But Lor'! I might's well hab talk' to a t'unner storm! Jes' all de answer I got wer all free ob dem a-screechin' in my ears at once fit to bust de top ob my head off."

"Ugh!" grunted the lady, in strong disgust. "Where is the ogre now?"

"Yer mean de speckled giant, mist'ess?"

"Yes."

"Out do's some'rs."

"Well, go in with your waiter and set the table."

"An' make a place fo' de speckled giant, mist'ess?"

"Yes, of course. He is your young master's guest."

Rufus Hilary, who was longing to go down to the bright parlor fireside, yet dared not meet his mother alone for fear of a severe lecture, had waited until he saw the three younger ladies descend the stairs, and then he followed them, and in the neatest of morning toilets entered the parlor.

He nodded to his mother and sisters, and then went up to Lilith, and offering his hand with some little embarrassment, said how very glad he was to see her, and how very grateful he felt for the honor she had done his mother and sisters in coming home with them.

"It is I who should be, as I am, indeed, very grateful to your dear mother for coming to me in my solitude and fetching me away from my lonely home, so full of sorrowful associations, and bringing me to this pleasant and sociable home," said Lilith, smiling.

"You are very kind to say this. And we shall do all we can to amuse you. You will presently, however, meet a very strange individual whom, I hope, you will believe that I should not have brought to the house had I known that you were to be here," said Rufus, deprecatingly.

"Then I am glad you did not know that I was coming, Mr. Hilary; for, indeed, I shall be delighted to see your tattooed chief."

"Rufus, where did you leave your guest?" inquired Mrs. Jordon.

"Walking up and down there on the front piazza. He hates to stay in the house, so that I thought I wouldn't bring him in until breakfast should be ready."

"Breakfast will be ready in a very few minutes now, so I think you had better go and bring him in."

"Now, girls, don't scream. He is a terrific object, but he is as gentle as a lamb; indeed he is."

Mr. Hilary then went out, and soon returned with the tattooed giant in his wake. He introduced him as follows:

"Ladies, I have the honor to present to you His Sublime Highness, Prince Kadmus Heliogabolas Arminicus, the great Arminian chieftain, who was taken prisoner in his youth by—a—who were they?—some savages, who disfigured (or decorated him, as you like to consider it) in this way; and from whom, after the most terrible sufferings and the most heroic achievements, he finally escaped."

While Rufus was delivering this speech, which was nearly identical with that of the showman, his little audience had time to examine the giant.

A giant he was, in point of fact, eight feet high if an inch, with a ninth foot added in the height of his headgear.

But let us describe him as he stood, beginning at the top, which was very near the ceiling of the room.

First, there was an immensely exaggerated white turban, with a stiff gold (or gilt) feather sticking straight up from the top, and a string of small gold (or brass) coins wound in and out among its folds. Below that a face with finely carved features and

splendid black eyes, but a face, neck and arms so vividly tattooed in all the colors of the rainbow as to be hideous and utterly indescribable, except in the one particular of the broad black rings that surrounded his black eyes, giving to their appearance a supernatural and horrible size. A long and full curling black beard rolled down to his waist. A sleeveless tunic of cloth of gold (or gilt), stamped all over with hieroglyphics of silver, blue and red, reached from his neck to his hips. Below that, full white trousers covered his limbs, and were gathered under gold bands over his knees, leaving the sturdy, tattooed ankles and sandaled feet bare, except for the cross-gartering of silver and gold braid. Heavy gold bands encircled his arms.

All these details the ladies of the house took in at a glance while Rufus Hilary was introducing his strange guest.

The tattooed giant acknowledged the introduction by folding his hands at the back of his neck, and "salaaming" until his white turban touched his gilt sandals.

"Breakfast is growing cold," snapped Mrs. Jordon.

"All right. Lead the way to the table, and we will follow you," said Rufus, as he reached up his hand and put it under the giant's arm, to lead him after the ladies to the breakfast room.

The largest and strongest chair in the house had been placed at the side of the table by the order of Mr. Hilary, for the accommodation of the giant.

At the suggestion of Hilary, the giant was served with coffee, not in a coffee cup, but in a china bowl, with a cake plate for a saucer. He was also served as abundantly with venison steaks and buckwheat cakes on the largest-sized dinner plates.

But he eschewed the use of knives and forks, and tore and ate his food with teeth and fingers, sucking

the latter at intervals, and holding them up and looking expectantly at the negro who happened to be nearest to him.

Hilary, who watched his guest closely and tried to understand his signs, beckoned Jed and told him to take his place behind the giant's chair, with a clean napkin in his hand, and to wipe his "highness'" fingers whenever his highness held them up. Jed, with his wool bristling and his flesh creeping, obeyed.

The two young ladies, who sat on the opposite side of the table, had to keep their eyes upon their plates to avoid a sight that made them sick.

Lilith, who on this occasion sat near Mrs. Jordon at the head of the table, was, fortunately for her, not in the line of view.

It was long before the elephantine appetite of the giant could be satisfied. Relays of venison steaks, sausages, and buckwheat cakes came in from the kitchen and vanished before the gastronomic powers of the monster. Relays of napkins also came out of the sideboard drawers, and were spoiled in turn and dropped in a heap upon the floor by Jed, whose bristling hair had time to come quite out of curl in the hour of terror, when he waited behind the "speckled giant's" chair to wipe his greasy, tattooed fingers.

At last the barbarian was satisfied.

And when Mrs. Jordon was quite sure of the fact, she gave the signal to rise from the table.

Mr. Hilary arose, and, as before, put his hand within the arm of the giant to lead him forth.

The ladies lingered around the fire to talk of the monster.

"Such a beast! It made me sick to see him eat with his fingers and then suck them—the pig!" said Harriet.

"Do pigs suck their fingers?" inquired Emily.

"But, withal, he was cleanly in his way. He always held up his hands to be wiped, after he had licked them. What did you think of him, Mrs. Hereward?" inquired Mrs, Jordon.

"I thought him very, very amusing," exclaimed Lilith.

"Although he never spoke a word?"

"Although he never spoke a word," replied Lilith. "But mind," she added, "I do not feel at all sure that he is what he pretends to be. He is a giant, certainly. That fact is undeniable; but I doubt about all the rest of him."

"But how, my dear? Why?"

"Nationalities seem rather mixed in him. His costume is incongruous, rather, and so are his manners. They all seem to me a skilful stage make-up, or what I should imagine to be such. He is a giant, of course; we see that; but I doubt the story about his being an Arminian chieftain stolen in his boyhood and tattooed by savages. I doubt his being tattooed at all. I suspect him to be a European or American giant, who is merely painted to simulate tattooing, and that these decorations disappear whenever he takes a bath."

"What a disillusionist you are, Lilith! But what about his salaaming, and his eating with his fingers?" inquired Emily.

"All acting, perhaps, my dear; and not very consistent acting either. Mind, I only suspect this. I do not know it. And, in any case, I really find him very amusing."

"Well, my love, real or counterfeit, I find him an intolerable nuisance," said Mrs. Jordon, leading the way from the breakfast room.

CHAPTER XVIII

LILITH IS SUMMONED

But the visitor did not stay another night; he could not. He dined with the family, on which occasion very much the same scenes recurred that had been enacted at the breakfast table.

After dinner the guest retired again to the big parlor to sit on the "divan" improvised for him by his host, and to smoke his chibouk. Coffee, cakes and sweetmeats were served to him there by a deputation of three waiters—Jupe, Jed and Tim—headed by their master; for not one of the darkies would venture into the presence of the speckled giant and suspected man-eater alone.

When the monster had drank several quarts of coffee, and eaten several pounds of confectionery, he slowly reared himself from his recumbent position, and then prepared to leave the house.

Hilary convoyed him into the presence of the ladies of the family, who were all seated at their work in the little parlor.

They all arose on his appearance.

"Prince Kadmus, and so forth, is about to return to Frosthill for the evening exhibition, to which I shall accompany him. As he leaves this neighborhood tomorrow morning he wishes to bid you good-bye, or something to that effect."

And having said thus much Mr. Hilary stepped aside, and the Arminian chieftain salaamed in the most solemn manner four distinct times, and then backed out into the hall, where Mr. Hilary was putting himself into his ulster and fur cap.

A large open wagon, drawn by two strong mules, stood before the house, with the panic-stricken Jed on the driver's seat.

Up into this vehicle the giant stepped, and sinking upon the seat, made the whole structure creak and groan under his weight.

Mr. Hilary, leaving the whole of the back seat to the accommodation of his enormous guest, lightly stepped into the wagon and took his place upon the box beside the driver, greatly to the encouragement of Jed's intimidated spirit.

And so they started for Frosthill.

"Go and open every one of the windows in the big parlor, every one of them! Take that mattress and rug outdoors and hang them on the fence. Mix a bucket of chloride of lime, and set it on the hearth. Then shut the parlor door and leave all so till bed-time!"

Such were the prompt and peremptory orders given by Mrs, Jordon to old Jupe, as soon as the sound of the wagon died away in the distance.

"Now, my dears, thank Heaven the monster is gone and we can have our tea in peace—and decency!"

"Will you never believe me? Can I never convince you how very much I have enjoyed this bizarre day? This wide departure from wearisome routine?" demanded Lilith, with a smile.

"You are very kind to put it in that light, I am sure. Black tea, or green, my dear?"

"Black, please."

The merry evening meal went on, and when it was finished the ladies adjourned to the small parlor, where they passed the evening in chatting and fancy work.

At ten o'clock Mrs. Jordon rang in the servants for evening prayers; soon after which the family prepared to retire.

On reaching the upper floor, the ladies found the three negro girls huddled together in Lilith's room. This was their first appearance since the morning, for they had hidden themselves in their back attic bed-

room, and not until "de debil" was ascertained to be out of the house had they consented to come out of their hysterics.

"You are a pretty set of fools, are you not, now?" questioned the irate lady of the house, as, upon stopping before Lilith's open door to bid her guest good-night, she discovered the three maids there.

"Oh, mist'ess," said Sally, the eldest, "doan blame us, please, ma'am. It was de debil as we met on de sta'rs. 'Deed an' 'deed it was."

"Then the devil spent the day here and took breakfast and dinner with us. And looked like a man, too. How do you account for that?" demanded their mistress.

"Oh, ma'am, a book-larn' lady like you knows as de inimy ob mankind can change hisse'f into any form he please, an' eben into bishops, priests an' deacons, as de prayer-book says, an' so 'haps he change hisse'f into a 'spectable, 'sponsible, portable lookin' ole gem'an w'en he went afo' yer face!" whimpered Sally.

"There you see, my dears," said Mrs. Jordon, addressing the younger ladies—"you see what tricks imagination will play with people's senses! These poor creatures imagine that they saw, and therefore did see, something even more terrific than our hideous, tattooed giant! Now, then, you simpletons! Go about your duties. Good-night, my dear Mrs. Hereward. I hope you will rest well, after this mad day, and spend the remainder of your time with us free from disturbance."

And so Mrs. Jordon and her daughters kissed their guest and retired to their own chambers, attended by Sally and Sukey.

Lilith's little maid, Sophy, was too much subdued by her fright of the morning to be very talkative that night. She waited on her lady in silence and showed no disposition to stay longer than was necessary.

As soon as she heard her companions come into the hall, she courtesied good-night and joined them.

Lilith was soon after in bed and asleep.

And so ended her first day at Rushmore Lodge.

The days that followed were quiet enough.

There was "nothing going on" at Frosthill, as Mr. Hilary pathetically complained—meaning, of course, that there was no public show of any sort.

He seemed to have forgotten, or to be willing to forget, that he had ever made the mistake of proposing marriage to her.

On Sunday they all went to church. This was the first time that Lilith attended divine service since her marriage, and, as her husband could not be by her side on the occasion, she was very glad to be with Mrs. Jordon and her daughters.

After the services were over, friends in the congregation came forward to speak to Lilith.

Both the rector and his good wife declared that Lilith must not return to mope alone at the Cliffs, but just so soon as her visit to Rushmore should terminate she must come to the rectory for a few weeks.

But Mrs. Jordon said that Lilith must stay at Rushmore as long as she and her daughters should be there—that was, until the first of February. After which she might feel herself at liberty to visit her friends at the rectory.

Here Dr. Kerr and Mrs. Kerr came up and shook hands with Lilith, and told her that he and his wife had been to call on her at the Cliffs, but had missed her, of course.

In the crowd that filled the churchyard, Lilith saw a group of her own servants from the Cliffs. Among them was Nancy, whom she beckoned to her side, and from whom she learned that all was going on well at the Cliffs, except Aleck, who was "as luny as ebber."

Lilith then sent kind messages by Nancy to the

household, and let the woman go back to rejoin her friends.

As soon as Mrs. Jordon could free herself and party from the coil of acquaintances that surrounded them, they re-entered their large carriage and drove home to Rushmore.

There they found Mr. Jabez Jordon, a little old man, with gray hair, flushed face, sharp features, keen blue eyes and a "jerky" voice and manner.

He had come to spend the day and stay overnight until Monday morning.

"Not that I like to come," he frankly said, as he grimly saluted his wife and step-daughters; "but that if I stay away while Mrs. Jordon is making such a long visit here, people will be saying that we have parted, or some such nonsense, and I should have to knock some half a dozen busy-bodies on the head for it. How do, step-son? How go the shows? The snake charmer and sword swallower, and the like? When you have 'wasted your substance in riotous living' among rope dancers and strolling players, you will, perhaps, turn showman yourself, eh? You had experience enough, eh?"

"Father," said Hilary, to divert the sour old man from his subject, "here is Mrs. Hereward. You haven't spoken to her yet."

"Ah! ah! I see! How do, my dear? I heard you were here. Well, I haven't seen you for a month of Sundays. Nor have I pined for your presence. Well, my dear, I congratulate you upon the departure of your late foster-father for the kingdom of Heaven. The kingdom of Heaven is a much happier place to live in than this world. You must agree to that, if you are a Christian. This world, my dear, is a most excellent world however—'to emigrate from.' And I condole with you from the bottom of my heart on your marriage, my poor child. Matrimony may be a

'holy' state, but it is not a happy one. Quite the contrary, as you will be sure to find."

"Old Jab is a 'rum un,' Mrs. Hereward. You must not mind him," said Mr. Hilary, apologetically.

Lilith smiled in silence as she turned and went upstairs with the two girls to take off her bonnet and wraps.

The family met at dinner, where Old Jab, the worst of pessimists, would have made everybody very uncomfortable with his sarcasms and cynicisms, had he not been kept in order by Mrs. Jab.

The young people were heartily glad when, on Monday morning, directly after breakfast, he took his leave.

As soon as the sound of Old Jab's horse's hoofs were lost in the distance, the four ladies wrapped themselves up warmly and went out on the lawn before the house, to take a "constitutional," indulging in desultory conversation as they walked.

"I never saw any one so improved in health and spirits in so short a time as you have been, Lilith, in the few days you have stayed with us," said Harriet, who was walking arm in arm with her guest.

"Your improvement has been wonderful, my dear. Rushmore agrees with you, and that being the case, you must not think of leaving it until the first of February, when we all go," added her hostess, who was walking behind with Emily.

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Jordon, you are very kind, and I should like to stay so much; but for me to stay a fortnight, when I only came to spend a week, I fear would not do," said Lilith, laughing.

" 'Not do?' But it must do! It shall do! It will do!" persisted the jolly lady.

Lilith's further objection was cut short.

A sound of wheels caught their attention.

"It is the carriage from the Cliffs, with Stephen on

the box! What can that mean?" muttered Lilith, with a vague presentiment of evil, as she dropped the arm of Harriet and hurried on towards the house.

She reached it just as the carriage drew up before the door and the negro coachman got down from the box.

Her three friends came slowly up while she questioned the man.

"What is it, Stephen? What is the matter? Have you come for me? Is anything wrong at the Cliffs?" she hastily inquired, on perceiving the man's troubled looks.

"De marster is comed home, ma'am, an' ax for you de firs' fing. He 'ribed airly dis mornin'. Took us all by 'sprise. Scared po' Alick so dat he, po' 'flicted creetur, run away in de woods 'hind de house, an' ain't been seed since. An' de marster's ax for you, and we telled him you was here."

"Mr. Hereward come home!" exclaimed Lilith, in a joyous tone. "Then I must return immediately. I am so glad he sent the carriage for me at once."

"An' po' Alick's 'mancipated de place," added Stephen, lugubriously.

"Run away?"

"Yes, mist'ess; 'mancipated de place, as I telled yer befo'."

"Well, he must be looked after and found. But your master, Stephen—how does he look? Is he quite well? Did he send me any message by you?" inquired Lilith.

"Young mist'ess, he sent no messidge at all. He jus' say to me, he say—'Stephen, put de bay hosses to de close carridge an' go to Rushmore an' bring your mist'ess home immediate'."

"Is he—is your master well?" inquired Lilith, in some uneasiness at not having received either note or message from her husband.

"I doan know, young mist'ess. But he looks jus' as w'ite as a sheet, and his lips pinch' tight togedder, an' his eyes burnin' like two coals! 'Deed, I doan know wot's de matter ob him, an' no mo' do Nancy! 'Pears like he hadn't a word to t'row to a dog, 'cept to me w'en he say—'Go to Rushmo' an' fetch yer mist'ess home immediate'.' 'Deed he did, young mist'ess. An' po' Alick, he didn't wait for de marster to speak to him, but soon's ebber he cotch his eye on to de marster he broke an' run like a har' fo' de houn's!"

"Stephen, let the horses stand for ten minutes, and I will be ready to go back with you at the end of that time," said Lilith.

Then turning to Mrs. Jordon, she explained:

"You see, dear friend, I must go home at once. I am wanted there."

"Yes, love, I see. I am very sorry! I hope there is nothing wrong at the Cliffs. I hope you will find Mr. Hereward quite well," said her hostess.

"I hope so. I believe so. I am not usually apprehensive; but to-day there seems to be a darkness over my spirit, like the shadow of approaching evil."

Lilith hurried into the house and up to her chamber, followed by her hostess and the two girls.

With the ready help of the two last mentioned, she packed her valise and put on her wraps.

Then she said good-bye to her friends, who accompanied her to the carriage door, and amid their kindest wishes took her seat and drove off.

CHAPTER XIX

"NOT EASILY JEALOUS"

We must return to Tudor Hereward, and to the moment when he first took Alick's fire-brand in his hand.

Looking at the post-mark, "Frosthill," and then at the strange, scrawling handwriting of the superscription, he muttered, with a deep sigh:

"Some constituent of my own immediate neighborhood wants some Utopian good that it is not in my power to give him."

Then he opened the letter and turned to the signature.

" 'Alick Turnbull.' What on earth can our butler have to write to me about?" he questioned, as he turned the page to read the letter, muttering comments as he proceeded.

" 'Wanted home immediate.' . . . 'Young youth been staying at the house ever since you have been gone.' . . . 'Nobody to keep him company but the young mistress.' . . . 'Please come home immediate.' "

"What does the idiot mean?" questioned Hereward. "A 'young youth' been staying at the Cliffs ever since I left? Well, he must have been one of the students at the Frosthill Institute out shooting partridges, and being caught in the snow-storm that followed my departure, took refuge at the Cliffs, where he would feel at home, as my dear father had such a craze for entertaining school-boys that he always had one or more there on their half-holidays.

" 'Nobody to keep him company but the young mistress?' Of course not! Who else should keep him company, I'd like to know? for visitors can no more get to the house than he can get away, and he is thrown upon his hostess for society as well as for shelter. Poor Lilith! I hope he makes himself agreeable. School-boys are not the most delightful guests in the world, particularly in stormy weather."

And he was about to drop the letter into the waste-paper basket, and its subject into oblivion, when some

secondary impulse caused him to stay his hand, and raise it for another reading.

Then he perceived a something which in his first perusal had eluded his observation—a certain subtle innuendo of impropriety—a suggestion of danger—underlying and running through all the simple facts stated.

"What does the fellow mean?" he asked himself for the third time, more gravely and anxiously than ever before. "How dared he write me in this manner about his mistress? I will teach him a lesson."

With these words Tudor Hereward held the letter once more over the waste-paper basket with the intention of dropping it in, but speedily changed his mind and threw it into the grate, where it instantly caught fire and burned to ashes. That letter was not to be left to the chance perusal of other eyes than his own.

Then he sat some time in troubled thought.

"Lilith is a child," he muttered to himself. "A mere child in years and in ignorance of the world. I ought not to have left her alone; though I thought I was leaving her in perfect safety in the home of her childhood, attended by our old family servants; but, then, I did not take into account the possibility of a snow-bound student. And Lilith, in the very innocence of ignorance, may have committed some harmless indiscretion, and drawn upon herself the animadversions of these presuming old family servants. And for the height of presumption and insolence commend me to your faithful old family servants."

Tudor Hereward sank into profound thought that lasted until the sudden outringing of all the church bells aroused him.

Then he hastily made his toilet, and set out to attend divine worship.

Before he returned to his hotel that day he had made up his mind.

Congress had adjourned until Wednesday. He would have time to run down to the Cliffs to see his wife, and he determined to do so.

At five minutes past twelve he was being whirled westward, on his way to Frosthill.

He could not sleep on this ride as he had done on the last one. The thought of Alick's letter troubled him. And the more he thought of it the more it troubled him.

The express train stopped at but few stations, but at these some passengers got out and others got in.

So the night wore towards morning.

At seven o'clock in the gray of the winter morning the train stopped at Eyrie Junction, about fifteen miles from Frosthill. Here many passengers left the train, leaving the car in which Mr. Hereward rode empty but for him.

Two ladies got on, however, and took the seat immediately in front of Tudor Hereward, although there were plenty of others; but, then, this was nearest the stove, and they had come in out of the wintry air.

Evidently, though they were acquaintances, they had not come to the station together, but had met on the platform, and as they settled themselves in their places they were continuing a conversation commenced outside.

They seemed strangers to Mr. Hereward, and probably soon forgot his presence, as he sat out of their sight behind them; and from the freedom with which they talked they seemed to think themselves alone.

Tudor Hereward paid no sort of attention to their talk, although it was carried on in a rather loud key, until a name caught his ear.

"No, honey," said the elder and stouter of the two women, "I haven't heard a word of all this story about young Mrs. Hereward! I only heard about her sudden marriage to the son at the death-bed of the father, and

of him—the bridegroom I mean—going back to Washington the day after the funeral, and leaving her all alone with the colored servants at the Cliffs, which certainly looked queer enough! But I never heard anything worse than that! You see, honey, I left the neighborhood just before the great storm came on, and I have been weather-bound at Eyrie, where I have been staying with my daughter; and so, of course, I couldn't hear. But what is it, anyhow?"

"Well, it is this," said the younger and thinner woman. "You know as he—young Mr. Hereward—went away on the evening of the great storm, and just before the storm came on."

"I should think I did, now, Marthy! I was on the same train with him as far as Eyrie Junction, where my daughter met me in her wagon."

"Yes, well, Mrs. Martin, it seems that the very next day after he left, a young man, a Mr. Ancillon, that belonged to the company of strolling players that were here in the Christmas holidays, goes straight to the Cliffs, and there he has been ever since! Now, what do you think of that?"

"He went to the Cliffs the day after the master left?"

"Yes; the very day after! Now, what do you think of that?"

"Why, that was in the height of the great storm. I suppose he got caught out in it, and went in there for shelter, and got weather-bound, like a great many other people in other places. That is what I think about it."

"Well, you are very charitable; but you must agree with me that it is very, very queer for a strange young man—a strolling play-actor, too—to go to a gentleman's house the very day after he has left it, and to stay there alone with the young wife for more than a week. Very queer, indeed."

"I don't see it, if he went there a traveler seeking shelter from the storm and getting weather-bound," said Mrs. Martin.

"But alone with the young wife. How about that?"

"He was not alone with her, Marthy. She had her old servants with her.

"A passel of niggers. What were they? They didn't sit in the parlor 'long of him and her, I reckon. They couldn't see and hear all that passed between them two. And I tell you what they did notice they didn't approve of. At least one good, faithful servant didn't. And that was their man Alick," said the younger woman, mysteriously nodding her head.

"Now, Marthy Spanker, you don't mean to say that Alick has been talking permiscuous about his master's family? You don't say that?"

"No; but I tell you what I do say—that that poor faithful nigger was so horrified by what he noticed of the goings on at the Cliffs between his young mistress and her improper visitor, that he took it upon himself to go to the post-office and get my nephew, Thomas Tims, to write a letter for him to his master, begging him to come home instantly—instantly—before worse followed," said Miss Spanker, nodding her head more wisely and meaningly than before.

"Did Tom Tims tell you all this?"

"Yes, he did. And not only me, but other people besides."

"So Tom Tims is your only authority for all this gossip. What a molehill to make a mountain of! But the post-master's boy did not keep the contents of the letter he wrote for the negro to himself, as he ought to have done—"

"I don't see why he should. It was no secret."

"Don't interrupt me, Marthy Spanker. I say Tom Tims went blabbing about that letter all over the neighborhood, even by your own showing. Yes, and,

no doubt, distorting and exaggerating everything in it. Yes, and evil-minded people put this and that together, which had nothing to do with each other, and made harm of it in a way they have."

"I don't understand you, Mrs. Martin."

"Oh, yes, you do."

"But I don't. What do you mean by 'putting this and that together and making harm'?"

"I mean they connect the negro's asking his master to come home with his mentioning the visit of the weather-bound traveler, and making evil of it when there was no evil, and no connection between the two items. If the post-master's boy said there was, I believe he lied, and every one who has repeated the story after him has lied, and very likely lied even more than he did. You should not believe all the scandal you hear, Marthy Spanker. Much less should you repeat it."

"I should be very sorry to do that, Mrs. Martin, for I did hear—indeed, I did—that the young strolling player who is keeping company with Mrs. Hereward at the Cliffs while her husband is away, is one of the handsomest and most fascinating men that ever was seen, even if he is no better than a tramp and a vagrant."

"What in this world has the man's looks got to do with it?"

"Oh, ho! I should think they had everything to do with it! They do say, indeed they do! that her and him were acquainted before she was married to Mr. Tudor Hereward; and that they met at some of them outlandish places where old Mr. Hereward used to take her in the summer, and him and her—I mean the play-actor and Miss Wyvil, as she was then—got captivated with each other there."

"Oh, what wicked lies!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin.

"Lies or no, I can't tell! But they do say, indeed they do, that that was the reason why he brought his company down here, just to see her. For you know the company is his. The great Plantagenet and Montmorencie Combination is all humbug. He is the Plantagenet and Montmorencie, too, as well as Ancillon! And he brought the whole company down here just for the sake of seeing her. Not that he expected to make much money out'n our little village."

"But he did make money, though! He had crowds every day and night."

"Well, that's neither here nor there. It happened, you know, that young Mrs. Hereward didn't go to see any of the performances. She couldn't, you know. The old man had just died, and was buried that same week. So she couldn't get out, and he didn't see her. But they do say—indeed, Mrs. Martin, they do—that he was so disappointed that, when Saturday night came, he sent his whole company on alone to Staunton, and he stayed behind on purpose to see her. And that when he heard Mr. Hereward had gone off to Washington and left her alone at the Cliffs, he went there to see her. And there he has been ever since. And the honest, faithful servants were all mortified and distressed almost to death, till one of them took courage to write to his master and beg him to come home before something awful should happen—a runaway match or something! Now, what have you to say to that, Mrs. Martin?" triumphantly demanded Miss Spanker.

"Honey, them's lies."

"But they say it is the truth!"

"Who are 'they'?"

"Everybody."

"Everybody means nobody! All lies, Marthy Spanker, from first to last! And I advise you not to be a-repeating of them; I do so, for your own good."

"I don't vouch for nothing! Him and her may be saints and angels, for all I know to the contrary. I only tell what I hear—but I have my own thoughts," said Miss Spanker.

"All a passel of lies! Old Man Tudor Hereward was too choice of his adopted daughter to 'low her to pick up improper acquaintances, away from home. And the young lady herself was too modest and dainty to have done so, whether or no! So she couldn't have had any knowledge of this stranger that went to her house for shelter from the storm."

"Now I don't know about that, Mrs. Martin."

"Don't know about what?"

"About what she knew and what she didn't. And no more do you, if it comes to that! No one, as far as I can hear, does know much about young Mrs. Hereward! All we do know is, that she was a foundling child, or something of that sort, as was adopted and brought up by old Major Hereward—as she could turn round and round her fingers as she liked! because he just doted on her! You don't know anything about her parents, nor what low vices she has taken from them, so why need you be surprised at anything she does or you hear?"

"I am not surprised at anything young Mrs. Hereward does; because all she does is good and true like herself. But I am surprised, and, moreover, I am shocked at what I hear you say of that lady! And I warn you to be careful, or you will get yourself and your father into serious trouble!"

"No I won't, for I only repeat what I hear! And I have heard worse than I have told you yet! I have heard, indeed I have—"

"I don't want to hear any more lies, Marthy Spanker! And, moreover, I won't! Thank the Lord, here we are almost at Frosthill!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin, beginning to gather up her baskets and bags, as

the train "slowed" towards the lighted station; for though the eastern horizon was red with the coming day, the lamps would not be extinguished until the sun should rise.

Tudor Hereward, who had felt the greatest difficulty in restraining himself during the exasperating discussion between his two fellow-passengers, now bent forward and addressed Miss Spanker:

"Madam, I beg pardon. I have not the advantage of knowing your name. Mine is Tudor Hereward. I have been an involuntary hearer of your discussion, and I have the privilege to inform you that—with the sole exception of the fact of my marriage—there is not one syllable of truth in all that you have uttered. I cannot, of course, call a woman to account for her slanders, however base and false they may have been; but I shall be glad to know, and shall take speedy measures to learn the name and address of father, brother, or husband, or any other man who may be held responsible for the slanders you have uttered in my hearing," concluded Mr. Hereward, as he resumed his seat.

The effect of this speech was rather stunning, not to say annihilating.

After the first start with which the two women had received the announcement of Mr. Hereward's name by his own voice, and had realized that he had overheard every word of their compromising conversation, they remained panic-stricken until he had ceased to speak and had sunk back in his seat.

Mrs. Martin was the first to recover herself.

"I warned you that you would get into trouble," she said, as she arose in her place, well laden with bag, basket, bandbox and bundle.

"I won't have anything to do with it. I don't know nothing about it! I only say what I hear! Nobody can't do nothing to me for saying that!" exclaimed

Miss Spanker, in a frightened, yet defiant tone, as she grabbed her valise and made for the door of the car.

The train had stopped and three passengers for Frosthill got off there.

Miss Spanker was met by a rough-looking, middle-aged man, whom she called "father," and with whom she hurried away as fast as she could walk and make him walk.

The train steamed on its way westward, leaving Mr. Hereward and Mrs. Martin standing on the platform.

CHAPTER XX

"PERPLEXED IN THE EXTREME"

THERE was not a carriage of any sort at the station. There seldom was at that hour. And the Cloud-Capped Cliffs was six miles off, on a very rough road.

Mr. Hereward called a man who seemed to be lounging about waiting for a job, and gave him a dollar to go to the Frosthill Hotel and fetch him a carriage.

When the man was about to start on his errand, Tudor turned to his fellow-passenger and inquired:

"Can he take a message for you anywhere?"

"Oh, dear, no, thank you, Mr. Hereward. I expect Job here with the buggy to meet me."

Tudor lifted his hat and stepped back.

"Why, Mr. Hereward, you don't seem to know me!" she said, in a tone that brought him again to her side.

"I—am afraid that I have not that honor."

"Oh, yes, you have—if it is an honor!" laughed the matron. "You know Mrs. Martin, who keeps the millinery and mantua-making department at Martin's Bazaar at Frosthill?"

"Oh! why, of course I do! I am glad to see you, Mrs. Martin," said Tudor Hereward.

"But you know my husband, poor old Job, better than me! Why, he was one of the most active men in the campaign that elected you! He was chairman of the Frosthill Central Committee, you know!"

"Of course I know how zealous and active Mr. Martin was, and how greatly our party is indebted to him, personally," replied Mr. Hereward.

"Ah! what a campaign that was, Mr. Hereward! I am sure poor old Job bellowed himself into an incurable bronchitis, hurrahing for Hereward and the whole ticket. What we did was done for love of old neighborhood, Mr. Hereward!"

"I do believe it. And I thank you most deeply," replied the young statesman; and on this occasion he spoke sincerely.

It was so refreshing to meet with an ardent partisan who was not an officer-seeker.

"And now I want to beg you, Mr. Hereward, not to mind, not to pay any more attention to what that poor fool, Marthy Spanker, said in the cars this morning. Her tongue is no scandal. Everybody knows that. You will not mind it, will you?"

"We will not discuss this subject, if you please, Mrs. Martin," replied Tudor Hereward, as his face grew dark again with passion.

"No, of course not," assented Mrs. Martin; "but I want you please to understand that I, at least, had nothing to do with the matter but to defend Mrs. Hereward. You know that I did defend her, don't you?"

"Yes, I do know it, and I thank you for the kindest intentions; but at the same time I must assure you that Mrs. Hereward did not in the least require defence. But we will not continue the subject, if you please."

"Certainly not. And I warned Marthy Spanker that she was letting her tongue run before her wit, and that

it would cut off her head some of these days—leastways that she would get herself and her father into trouble if she wasn't careful. She has got a father, Mr. Hereward—Old Nick Spanker. And if you must pitch into anybody, pitch into him! He stumped for the other ticket, and called you a bloated aristocrat, and my poor, innocent old Job, who never handled a gun in his life, and never rebelled even against me or the children, an ex-rebel guerrilla! Yes, he did! He abused you; and his daughter slanders your wife."

"Mrs. Martin, this subject must drop here and now! I credit you and I thank you for the best intentions towards me and mine. But here and now this subject must be dropped and dropped forever!" said Tudor Hereward, sternly, though politely.

"All right, Mr. Hereward, it is unprofitable! And here comes Old Job—Old Job—with his old horse and buggy. Now, does he look like an ex-guerrilla? Well, good-bye, Mr. Hereward. We'll make you a senator next time!" said the jolly dame, as she hurried off to meet her husband, who pulled up his horse and held out his hand to help her.

She threw bag, basket, bandbox and bundle into the bottom of the buggy, then stepped up into the seat beside him, took the reins from his hands, and drove off.

A moment later the carriage from the Frosthill Hotel drew up, and Mr. Hereward entered it and gave the order to drive to Cloud-Capped Cliffs.

As the carriage started, the wintry sun rose.

Tudor Hereward had only by the very strongest effort maintained his self-control while in the presence of others. But his soul was filled with rage and shame. Never before in the whole course of his domestic history had any woman of his family been touched by the faintest breath of slander.

Probably, if any man had so slandered his wife,

Tudor Hereward would have broken the law that he was bound to defend, and have slain the slanderer on the spot and incurred the dishonor of a public trial, if no worse.

But what can a gentleman do with a poor, ignorant, gossiping woman, however malicious and venomous her tongue may be? If the slanderer had been a man, Tudor Hereward could have punished his offence fatally in his person, or, if a rich woman, heavily in her purse, and given the amount of damages in charity.

And then his thoughts turned upon Alick, the meddler, the mischief-maker, the incendiary, who had dared to get that letter written about his young mistress which had started all this fire of slander, this burning and consuming shame!

And he mentally promised that faithful old family servant and emancipated freedman such a horsewhipping as he never had dreamed of in the old slave days.

And then he thought of Lilith.

What had the simple child been doing to draw upon herself the blame of these brutes?

A strolling player had taken shelter from the storm at the Cliffs and had then become weather-bound there for days.

Not a desirable inmate, but an inevitable one under the circumstances. He was reported to be young and good-looking. He was also, probably, witty and entertaining, as almost all Bohemians are. He made himself as agreeable as possible to his hostess. Perhaps read to her. Most likely recited for her soliloquies from Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, and so on.

"I can well imagine such scenes would be described by the ignorant negroes as 'carryings on.' Perhaps they played snowball together!" he reflected.

And finally his thoughts came and sat in judgment on HIMSELF.

"I am the first offender and the most of all to blame! I should not have left her. She did not wish to stay behind, poor little girl! She wanted to come with me, and I ought to have taken her! It would not have been more lonely for her, even in my den in Washington than it is in the old manor-house. However, I will remedy the evil as far as I may! I will take her with me when I return to Washington."

So absorbed was Tudor Hereward in these thoughts, that the distance between Frosthill and the Cliffs was passed over, and the carriage was rolling up the avenue towards the house, before he was well aware of the fact.

The front of the mansion was still closed; but as the carriage drew up before the door, he saw the very man whom he wished first to see. He was wandering about the grounds with a load of brush in his arms, in a distracted sort of a way, as if he had forgotten where to take it.

Mr. Hereward let down the window and called out:

"Alick! Alick! Come here! I want to speak to you!"

The effect of this summons was startling on the man summoned.

He stopped at the sound of the voice, looked around in a dazed and frightened manner, caught sight of his master's pale and angry face, dropped his load of brush, and with a howl of despair, fled for the covert of the woods behind the house.

"The guilty wretch is conscience-stricken and expects retribution," said Mr. Hereward to himself, as he took up his valise, opened the carriage door and alighted.

He paused for a moment to pay the driver, and then he went up to the front entrance of the house.

But before he could knock, the door was opened by Steve, who had heard the sound of the carriage wheels, and who at the sight of his master fairly laughed for joy.

"Oh, oh, Marse Tudor! Is it you, sah? Wot a 'lightful s'prise! But I's moughty proud to see you, an' will us all be!" he cried, grinning from ear to ear as he opened wide the door. "But, my Lor' A'mighty, Marse Tudor! Wot is de matter wid yer, sah? Is yer comed home ill? Lor'-a-massy, yer's as white as a sheet!" exclaimed the negro, in dismay, as the strong lights revealed the pale, stern face of the returned master.

"Nothing! Nothing but want of rest," hastily replied Mr. Hereward—"rest of body, mind and spirit," he mentally added.

"Den yer must hab it, sah! Dat's sure! Mus' stay 'long ob us, an' lib on game, an' keep airly hours till yer get well and strong ag'in. We'll set yer up, sah!"

"Thank you, my good fellow! How are all here?"

"All is moughty well, t'ank de Lord, sah! An' all will be proud to see you!" replied Steve, as he opened the parlor door and stood aside with a sweeping bow to let his master enter the room.

"I do not think Alick looked very well, or was very glad to see me. He took to his heels at the sight of me," said Mr. Hereward, as he stood beside the newly kindled fire in the open chimney of the little parlor.

"Oh, po' Alick! Doan yer min' him, marster, please! Po' Alick is 'flicted!"

" 'Flicted?" questioned the master, in perplexity. " 'Flicted?"

" 'Flicted inter his lunacies. Yes, sah. 'Deed he is. Po' Alick."

"Do you mean that the man has gone crazy? He looked so."

"Yes, young marster, dat's jest whey it is. C'azy.

Po' Alick done los' his head. Po' Alick ain't had no head for—for—a week or mo', I reckon. 'Deed it's de trufe."

"How is your mistress? Is she up?" inquired Mr. Hereward, suddenly changing the subject.

"De young madam ain't home, Marse Tudor."

"Not home!" exclaimed Mr. Hereward, while a fierce doubt, which he was ashamed to feel, pierced his heart.

"Well, no, sah; not home, I's sorry to say, 'long as yer've come back."

"WHERE IS SHE, THEN?"

"Lor'-a-mighty, Marse Tudor! She ain't in de grabeyard, sah. She's all right, de young madam is," replied the negro, startled and frightened at the look and tone with which the young man asked this question.

"I asked you WHERE?"

"She's ober to Rushmo', 'long ob Mist'ess Jab Jordon an' de Miss Mileses. She been dere a week to-day. De ladies come o' las' Monday mornin' an' spent de day 'long ob her, an' seein' how lonesome an' low de young madam was, dey 'suaded ob her to go home 'long o' dem fo' a week, an' we dem colored people was powerful glad to hab de madam go 'way an' 'joy herse'f wid de oder young ladies, 'cause she hab been awful lonesome yere by her lone se'f."

During this explanation Tudor Hereward had time to recover himself, and at its close he put a leading question:

"What! Has your mistress been so very lonesome? Has no one come to see her?"

"Hi, Marse Tudor! How anybody gwine to get to de house t'rough all dat big snowstorm and de blocked up yoads? Nobody could come, nor likewise go, fo' mo' dan a week. Soon's ebber dey could come Mist'ess Jab Jordon an' de young ladies come firs', w'ich I tol'

yer, an' toted off de young madam. An' den de neighbors come fas' enough, but de young madam she wa'n't yere to 'ceive 'em."

"Oh! who were they?"

"Dere was Dr. Kerr an' his famberly, an' Parson Cave an' his famberly, an' dere was—"

"That will do," interrupted the master.

"Well, sah, mos' all de neighbors come 'fo' de week was out, but ob course dey didn't see de young madam, w'ich was at Rushmo'," concluded Steve, not to be cut short in his narrative.

"And no one came during the bad weather?"

"No, sah, no one; dat is, no neighbors, sah. No one ob no 'count. No one worf mentionin'. Dere was a young man come de ebenin' arter yer lef', sah! But he doan count for nuffin' caze he war a stranger an' a trabeler, druv in by de storm, w'ich neider man nor beast could 'a' libbed if dey stayed out in it, yer know, sah! So no fanks to him fo' comin'! 'Twa'nt fo' any lub ob us he come, but 'caze he was 'pelled by the storm."

"Who was he? What was his name?"

"Well, marster, 'pears he was one ob dem player-acterin' people wot were yere at de C'ris'mas holidays, an' his name were Answer-long, w'ich were a funny name!"

Time and reflection had calmed all his disquietude, and he stood waiting for his young wife's return without a sign of that mental and bodily weariness and illness which, on his first arrival, had alarmed his servants. He was no longer "white as a sheet," as they had described him.

He was not sure whether he should even ask Lilith about her visitor. He would wait to see whether she herself should mention him.

It was high noon when at length the carriage, bring-

ing Lilith home, turned into the avenue leading up to the house.

Tudor Hereward stepped down from the porch to receive her.

As soon as the carriage drew up before the house, it was Lilith's own eager hand that opened the door before any one could do it for her, and she sprang out, her lovely young face beaming with such delight that, whatever else Hereward might doubt, he could not doubt her intense pleasure at seeing him again.

Yet his reception of her was rather playful than affectionate.

"Well, my little lady-love," he said, as he took her in his arms and kissed her, "have I taken you very much by surprise?"

"Oh, yes, Tudor! But it is such a happy surprise. How I wish I had been home when you arrived! I am so glad you sent for me at once!" she said, as they went up into the house together.

"You are looking well, dear," he said, when she had laid off her bonnet and dolman and was seated by him near the parlor fire.

"Oh! I am always well."

"Yes, I know. But how have you borne the solitude of this place? It has been very lonely for you."

"Yes," said Lilith, hesitating and changing color—"but—at first—I mean it was very lonely at first."

He was watching her, and he saw her confusion.

"At first you were very lonely. And afterwards, Lilith?"

"Mrs. Jordon came with her daughters and spent the day, and took me away to stay a week with them. Was I wrong to go away for a week, Tudor?"

"No, dear, why should you think so?"

"I don't know. Mrs. Jordon said it was right that I should go; and I knew the house could be safely left

in charge of Nancy, as it has been left on many occasions."

"Of course."

"And everybody has been so good to me, Tudor. Dr. Kerr and Mrs. Kerr, and Mr. Cave and the Misses Cave have called—though it was while I was at Rushmore—and when we met them all at the church yesterday they all invited me to come and stay a week at their houses; and indeed there was quite an emulation between them as to who should have me first. It was so very good in them!" exclaimed Lilith, warmly.

"It was kind and neighborly," said Mr. Hereward. But he noticed that she had not alluded to the visit of the stranger who had stayed a week at the house. Was it, he asked himself, that she considered the visitor too insignificant to be thought of or spoken of, or was she afraid to speak of him? Tudor Hereward could not answer his own question. He resolved to wait and watch. He was again disturbed, and again ashamed of his disturbance.

"Are you really so glad to see me, Lilith?" he inquired.

" 'Glad?' Oh!" she said, looking up at him with a face so radiant with truth and joy that he could not doubt her.

"Yet I wonder why she does not speak of that strange visitor, and why she hesitated and faltered when first I asked if she had been very lonely," he thought to himself.

"Well, my dear, since you are so glad to see me, will you be glad to go back with me to Washington? For you understand, of course, that this is but a flying visit home. Will you return with me to the city?"

Her face of rapture was a picture to see.

"Return with you? Oh! yes, indeed, if you will have me," she said, with delight in every tone of her voice.

"She is a perfect child," he thought, as his doubts vanished.

"Very well, little lady-love. But I am afraid you will find life very dull there with me—very different from the gay lives of other ladies who accompany their husbands to the national capital."

"Oh, no, no, Tudor. You know we could not be gay; but I should never think life dull with you," she answered, warmly.

"But, my dear, I am away every day, all day long, and often late at night, at the Capitol—either in my seat in the Hall of Representatives or serving on some committee, or——"

"But I should see you every night, Tudor, even if it should be late; and that would be happiness compared to this recent separation."

"Yes, love, you would see me at night—bending over my writing-desk, where the dawn has often found me."

"Oh, Tudor! Do you really have to work so hard? I must try to help you."

"You help me! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are laughing at me," she said, with perfect good humor; "but indeed I could help you. I could lighten your labors very much."

"What could you do, my little lady-love?" he inquired, laying his hand patronizingly on her small, black, curly-haired head. "What could you do?"

"All that a private secretary could do for you."

Hereward started slightly, and looked wistfully into her face.

"Have you any idea of the duties of a private secretary, Lilith?"

"More than any young person could have who enters upon those duties for the first time," she answered, simply.

"Indeed! Well, what are they? What could you do?"

"I could read and answer letters, hunt out the authors you wish to consult, mark and copy the extracts you wish to use, sometimes translate, if desirable, write to your dictation, or copy in a clear, legible hand your hastily written, interlined and blotted manuscript. Of course I could do all that, Tudor; and oh! I should be so glad—so very glad—to help you! I, who have nothing at all else to do, and feel ashamed of my own idleness and worthlessness."

"Lilith! You surprise me! Where did you acquire that much knowledge of what might be expected of a private secretary?"

"Why, by helping our dear father. Don't you know he used to occupy himself during the long winter evenings by writing a great deal for the papers?"

"Would it be discreet to inquire now with how many foreign languages you are conversant?" demanded Hereward, with good-humored irony.

"Conversant with but three—Latin, French and German. For those three I took the highest honors at Vassar. Then, with the aid of grammar and dictionary, I can translate Spanish and Italian."

"Ah! and so you helped my father in his literary work in this manner?"

"Oh, yes! And sometimes I wrote at his dictation. And at other times I made fair, legible copies of his articles, which in their first draft were always frightfully blotted and interlined. Yes, so we used to pass winter evenings, and tempestuous days when we could not get outdoors. Oh! you do not know what chums father and I were! We were co-laborers in working hours and play-mates in play-time!"

"I seem to know little or nothing of all this. You must miss him very much," said Hereward, gravely.

"No, I do not," replied Lilith, seriously.

"What! How is that? You were very fond of him."

"I was very fond of him."

"And yet you do not miss him?"

"No, strange as it seems, I do not miss him. I cannot explain it even to myself; but—I do not seem to have lost him; he seems to be still in the house; everywhere about; a sense of his presence is constantly with me; that is the reason why I never miss him! Yes, you may well stare at me; for I wonder at myself and at the comfort and satisfaction this feeling of his presence gives me."

"The united effect of memory and imagination, my dear; but I will not object to it, since it pleases you. And so you think, little lady mine, that you could help me in the same way in which you used to help my father?"

"I am sure I could, Tudor! And oh! how I wish you would let me try! It is the work I should like best of all to do, because I should be with you, helping you. And it is the work I can best do, because I have been used to it, you know!"

"I 'know'! It seems to me that I know very little of you, my lady, except what I daily discover, or what you choose to tell me! I asked you just now whether you had any idea of the duties of a private secretary; and you answered satisfactorily and gave an instance, if not a 'reference.' I now ask you, my little love, whether you have any idea what a great relief your help would be to my over-burdened hours if you could do one-quarter even of what you propose?"

"Oh, Tudor! You make me so glad when you say that! Yes, indeed, I can do all that I have proposed to do, and much more. Try me! Only try me! I shall be so diligent! so careful! I know you do think that I am too young, and perhaps too foolish to do much good; but I am seventeen now, and in two years I shall be nineteen, and older and older every year! And even now I am not half so much of a child as I seem to be!

I have always been the companion of our dear father, and he did not think me so childish, you know!"

"I repeat that I know very little of you, my darling, except what I am now to discover," said Hereward, with more tenderness than he had yet shown towards her.

"Oh, then, find me out, Tudor! Prove how useful I can be to you! I do so long to be useful! I do so despair at being idle and worthless!"

"And yet this work that you propose does not appear to be a woman's work," objected Hereward.

"Not always! Not often, perhaps! Not when women have large households to look after! But in my case it is different. What home duties should I have, living with you in a room at a hotel? To take the best care of your wardrobe and my own need not occupy half an hour a week! Will you take me for your private secretary or for office boy, Mr. Hereward? Shall I make my application out in writing to show whether I can write legibly and grammatically? I will do so!" she said, with a gay little laugh, as she went and sat down to the writing table, drew a sheet of paper towards her and began to work.

Soon she arose with a bow, and handed him a folded paper, which he opened with a smile, and read:

CLOUD-CAPPED CLIFFS, Jan. 23, 18—.

TO THE HON. TUDOR HEREWARD, House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.—Sir: I have the honor to solicit an appointment as your private secretary. For my character and competence, I beg leave to refer you to the Rev. Mr. Cave, Rector of St. Luke's, and Dr. Kerr, both of Frosthill. Very respectfully, your obedient servant, ELIZABETH W. HEREWARD.

"I shall keep this as a family curiosity," said Hereward, as he put the letter into his pocket.

"Oh, you may laugh, sir! But that is just exactly the sort of letter that I should have written to 'some person or persons unknown,' had I not had the greater honor of becoming your wife," she said, with a grave little nod of her curly black head.

Hereward gazed on her with feelings of admiration and tenderness. He felt his heart drawn towards her as it had never been drawn before. He sat down beside her, put his arms around her, took her little bowed head upon his bosom and whispered, gently:

"You shall be your husband's private secretary, my accomplished little wife! Ah, I did not know half what a treasure my father was giving me, when he gave me you! Look up, Lilith! Let me see your sweet face. Look up and tell me how long it will take you to get ready to accompany me to Washington?"

"It will not take me an hour to pack up. You know, being in mourning, I have so few things to take. When do you wish to go, Tudor?" she inquired, gradually recovering herself.

"This is Monday. We must leave here to-morrow morning, for I must be at my post on Wednesday."

"Oh, I shall be quite ready. There is Steve waiting to speak to you."

The negro man stood in the door, respectfully waiting.

"What is it, Steve?"

"De oberseer, sah, hearin' as yer'd 'rove at home, wishin' to see yer."

"Where is he?"

"In de dinin'-room, sah."

"Very well. I will go to him," said Hereward, rising and leaving the parlor.

Lilith then went upstairs to her own chamber, which she found in perfect order, with a fine fire burning in the open chimney, and Nancy in dutiful attendance.

" 'Deed, Lor' knows I moughty glad to see yer back ag'in, Miss Lilif, 'deed is I. An' yer look so well an' happy, too! Better'n I ebber see yer look since ole marse went to glory," was Nancy's salutation.

"Thank you, Nancy. I enjoyed my visit very much, indeed, but I am glad to get home to you again."

"Dat's you, Miss Lilif. Yer allers was 'tach' to ole Nancy. W'en yer was a baby yer nebber would go to no one else f'om me, 'cept it was ole marse."

"But, Nancy, I am going to leave you again soon. I am going to Washington with Mr. Hereward."

"Yes, I 'spicioned dat; and dat's all right, too. Ef I was yer own born mammy I couldn't 'plain ob dat. 'Deed, I fink yer ought to goed w'en young marse firs' went hisse'f."

"Yes, Nancy, dear, but we haven't got time to talk. We must entertain the master as a distinguished guest to-day, for to-morrow morning we leave for Washington," said Lilith.

And then the little mistress and her housekeeper went into consultation on dinner and other household matters.

Meanwhile, Tudor Hereward, having finished the short interview with his overseer, took a solitary stroll over the plantation to commune with his own thoughts. He was studying Lilith—the child whom at his dying father's petition he had married in the same mood of recklessness and desperation in which, had he been an irreligious man, he might have committed suicide. He had considered his marriage a most grievous burden—all the more oppressive because he was resolved to do his duty as faithfully and conscientiously by his child-wife as if she had been the brilliant woman of the world whom he had dreamed of as his proper companion.

Now he thought of all that she desired, claimed and

petitioned to be to him—his wife, companion and co-laborer through all his career.

Why, this was more than he had ever dreamed of in his ideal "brilliant woman of the world."

But could she, that little Lilith of seventeen years, with the form of a child and the face of a baby, be all of that to him? No, no; impossible. She was a lovely little being, and in her presence he was fond of her, but it was the fondness of a man for a winning child or a kitten. She could never be the intimate, sympathetic companion of his intellectual, aspiring life.

True, she had graduated with honors when she was but sixteen years of age from one of the most distinguished colleges for young ladies, and she had helped her foster-father in his literary labors during the last years of his life.

But all that proved no intellectual superiority. A good memory, a medium understanding and industry were all that was required for such achievements.

She was his wife; she might be his assistant; but could she be his true mate, his second self, one with him in heart and mind? Ah! no; it was not in her to be such!

She loved him, indeed. He knew and felt that she did. But she loved him exactly as she had loved his father; only a little less, perhaps. Not with the love that he wanted from the woman who was to share his life and make his home and his happiness. No, nor could he give her the love that he could have given to such a woman. He could only be fond of her—while he saw her! Yes, there was one thing more that he could and would be. He could be faithful to her, and absolutely and utterly faithful he determined to be.

And to make a beginning in this direction, he resolved to tell her all the story of his disappointment in the case of Miss Von Kirschberg, or Madame Bruyin.

"Poor little one! Poor, little, loving, devoted child!

What a perfect wife she would have made to a man suited to her years and mental calibre! Bah!" he exclaimed, with a sudden dog-in-the-manger jealousy. "There is no such man. And I will love her as well as I can, if she is only a lovely, little, bright school-girl."

So saying, Tudor Hereward turned his face homeward.

Dinner was ready, and Lilith—who had changed her dress and put a white camelia in her dark hair—looked prettier than ever, as she presided at the table.

That evening, after tea, as the newly married pair sat by the pleasant wood fire of their little parlor, Tudor Hereward told Lilith the whole story of his first love and his bitter disappointment.

She listened in silent sympathy, until, at the end of the narration, he put his arm around her waist, drew her head down on his bosom and whispered:

"Now, Lilith, my little one, I felt that it was due to my wife to tell her all this—to have no secret from her who is to be my consort through life. And now that I have told you all this, my sweet one, I will dismiss the whole subject from my thoughts forever, as I hope that you will be able to do; for, darling, your own true heart is worth all the brilliant counterfeits in the world."

"Oh, Tudor, Tudor! I feel so much, I do not know what to say to you, but this—I hope you will let me try to be all to you that you dreamed the finer woman would have been. Only give me the opportunity. See, I am your own. Heaven and your father gave me to you, and if all my life's devotion can make up to you for your life's disappointment, indeed you have it!" she said, in her fervor of sympathy and affection, speaking with a freedom at which she blushed.

"Do not say so, dear love. I do not deserve that you should. No, Heaven knows that I do not," he sighed, as he stooped and kissed her.

Then he lighted a cigar and went out on the porch.

When he had left the room a change came over the pretty, childish face—a change that transformed it to tragic intensity. Not from reflex jealousy, for there was no bitterness in her heart connected with this first infatuation of her husband; he was her husband; he had told her all about it; he had married her; so she could never be jealous of that first lost love, especially as jealousy was not in her nature; no, her present anguish was that of remorse—remorse so keen that now, when she was alone, it found expression in words:

"He has told me all; he has kept nothing from me; he has told me his heart's deepest secret!—my true and loyal husband!—and I—I have a secret, a fatal secret, that I must forever keep from him—from him to whom all my love and faith are due. Oh, the burden! the burden! the grievous burden of this secret! It is more than I can bear! Oh, Lord of Heaven and earth! My burden is heavier than I can bear!" she cried, clasping her hands upon the top of her head and walking distractedly up and down the floor in a paroxysm of mental anguish that, could it have lasted, must have destroyed her. But the saving feature of these sharp agonies is that they do not last. The storm of emotion spent itself, and Lilith dropped into her chair, where she sat in the stillness of reaction and exhaustion.

In half an hour Mr. Hereward came in and found her sitting calmly where he had left her.

"Dear," he said, "we must leave here to-morrow by eight o'clock, in order to catch the ten o'clock train for Washington. So all your preparations should be completed to-night."

"All are completed, Tudor. When shall we reach Washington? tomorrow?" she inquired, without raising her head, lest he should discover traces of her

emotion and ask her questions which she dare not answer truthfully.

"About six o'clock in the evening, dear—time enough for the hotel dinner and a good night's rest; but to prepare for the long day's journey, Lilith, you had better retire to rest," he answered.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MEETING ON THE TRAIN

Very early the next morning the household at the Cliffs was astir. Breakfast was on the table at seven. The carriage was at the door at eight, with Steve on the box.

"Have you seen or heard anything of Alick?" Mr. Hereward inquired of the coachman.

"Yes, sah. Alick is sabe and sound ober at Mr. Jab Jordon's. Levi, Mr. Jab's man, come ober yere to tell we-dem," replied Steve.

"Very well. Fielding has instructions to look after him and notify me if the man should grow worse, or require medical attendance or restraint," said Mr. Hereward.

He handed Lilith into her seat, followed her, and the carriage started.

It was a very pleasant drive, over the stubble fields and through the leafless woods, in the bright sunshine of that early winter morning.

They made such good speed that they reached Frosthill full twenty minutes before the train was expected to start.

Mr. Hereward sent back his carriage to the Cliffs and led Lilith into the waiting-room, where he left her while he went to the news-stand to buy some papers and magazines to read on the journey.

There happened to be no one in the room but herself. Frosthill was never a busy station.

Lilith sat alone, wrapped in her own thoughts, until she was startled by a voice and a step that came up behind her.

"Why, Lilith, darling, you here? Where are you going?"

She recognized the voice even before she saw the speaker. She arose, turned, and confronted Mr. Alfred Ancillon.

She clasped her hands and raised her eyes to his, in an agony of appeal, as she muttered, hoarsely:

"I am going to Washington by this train. Oh, for the love of Heaven!—Listen!—Mr. Hereward is here! —Go! go! do not let him see you!—Oh, pardon me for saying this, but leave me while I have my senses left. Please—please go!"

"Yes, yes, I will. Hereward here? I don't see him. Where is he?"

"At the book-stand, and he will be back immediately. Oh, go!"

"Well, dearest, I will. I understand, my darling girl. I understand. I, too, am going to Washington, and I shall see you there. *Au revoir, ma belle fille.*" And Mr. Ancillon lifted his jaunty cap from his black curls and walked away.

Lilith, pale and trembling, lowered her crape veil to hide her agitation from the eyes of her husband, who was now rapidly approaching with a bundle of newspapers and magazines in his hands.

"Come, my little lady-love. The train will be here in a few seconds," he said, as he offered his arm to Lilith.

She arose and took it in silence, and they walked out and stood on the platform just as the warning shriek of the steam-pipe was heard, followed by the rumbling thunder of the approaching train.

As soon as it stopped, Hereward hurried his young wife into the ladies' car, found for her a comfortable seat and took one by her side. And the train, which had stopped only thirty seconds, flew off again on its eastern flight.

There were but few passengers in the ladies' car, and all were strangers to the Herewards.

It was while the train was rushing on at its utmost speed that Lilith saw the door in front of her open and a gentleman put in his head. He was Alfred Ancillon. He met Lilith's eyes, exchanged glances with her, nodded, withdrew and closed the door after him.

Mr. Hereward, absorbed in the newspaper that he was reading, saw nothing of this by-play.

The train rushed on and on. It was the way-train and stopped at many stations, where people got out and other people got in.

Finally, at two o'clock, the train stopped at one of the more important junction stations, where the conductor cried out in a loud voice, that reached from one end to the other of the long train:

"WHEATFIELDS! Twenty minutes for dinner."

"Come, dear, will you get out?" inquired Mr. Hereward, rolling up his papers and preparing to leave the car. "Shall we get some dinner? They keep a pretty fair table at the 'Farmers' Rest.' Will you come?"

"No, please, Tudor, not if I can be permitted to stay here," pleaded Lilith.

"But it would rest and refresh you to leave the cars for a few minutes," he urged.

"I would rather not, sir, thank you, Tudor. Please go and dine. I shall be very well here," persisted Lilith, who was in deadly fear of meeting Alfred Ancillon by venturing into the hotel.

"But you must have something, dear. You can have it here if you wish. What shall I send you?" urged Hereward.

"Since you think so, you may send me a sandwich and a cup of tea; but if you do not hurry, Tudor, you will not have time to get your own dinner."

"I think you wish to get rid of me, little one," he said, smiling as he left the car.

Every one else had also left it.

Lilith was alone for about two minutes, and then a hand was laid upon her shoulder, and a voice spoke in her ear:

"Lilith, my child, one moment—let me speak to you for one moment! Where will you be in Washington? Where shall I be able to meet you there?"

It was the hand and it was the voice of Alfred Ancillon.

Lilith, in an agony of terror and distress, feeling on the very verge of swooning, could scarcely answer him.

"Oh," she faltered, "you must not try to see me in Washington. You must not, indeed. Oh, pardon me for saying this, but you must not!"

"Lilith, my darling, that seems very hard. Why may I not see you sometimes alone?" he pleaded, fixing those large, pensive dark eyes imploringly on her troubled face. "I who have some rights over you also —I who have lost you for so many years—for all your life, in fact. Why may I not see you sometimes alone?"

"My duty to my husband—" began the young wife; but her voice faltered, and she watched nervously through the car window for any sign of the return of Hereward.

"Your duty to your husband? I do not dispute that. I even like it. I would have you to be a good and true wife. But have you no duties to me, Lilith?"

"Oh, I do not know! I do not know! My mind is perplexed; my heart troubled. The burden of this secret is killing me—is killing me! Oh, if you would release me from my oath! If you would but let me tell

my husband!" Lilith pleaded, in a low, heart-broken tone.

"And consign me to a fate you dare not even think of, and I will not even name."

"Oh, no! no! no! I cannot betray you. I will not. But oh! do not try to meet me in Washington! Do not! I could not—would not meet you without my husband's knowledge. To keep this secret from him is as far as I can go, as much as I can do. And it is killing me! For he is so true and good, so frank and noble, that he keeps no secret from me. And I feel as if I were sinning against him all the time."

"My poor little girl, I am very sorry for you. I almost regret that I ever sought you out, Lilith. But the temptation to look once upon the face that belonged to me was too strong. And since I have looked upon that sweet face it has become the light of my life, Lilith. And you can say to me that I must not seek to see it in Washington!"

"No, you must not! You may believe in my love for you—in my duty to you. But you must not do anything to make trouble between my husband and myself! You would not, would you?"

"Not willingly, dear child. But I must see you again. I must look again on the face that is the light of my life! Good-bye, my sweet child."

And he turned and abruptly left the car, as a hotel waiter, bearing a tray, came in and placed it on the turned-over seat in front of Lilith.

But she could not eat. Her mouth was parched, her throat choked. She drank the cup of tea and sent the waiter away.

Ten minutes later Mr. Hereward and all his fellow-travelers re-entered the car, and the train started.

The remaining half of the journey was made without incident worth recording.

And precisely at six o'clock in the evening the train reached Washington.

CHAPTER XXII

WILL HE LOVE HER?

"STAND here for a moment, dear, while I get a carriage," said Tudor Hereward, as he left his young wife on the crowded platform, and stepped out among the shouting, jostling pack of hackmen and porters, who render our railway stations the terror of timid travelers.

Her husband was no sooner lost in the confusion and herself alone in the crowd, than Lilith felt a hand laid upon her shoulder, and heard a voice whispering in her ear:

"Only a moment to say good-bye, my child, and to ask you to give me your address," pleaded Mr. Alfred Ancillon, standing behind her.

"Oh, I dare not! I dare not do so! Pray—pray—if you love me, do not seek to see me in Washington," Lilith implored, in deadly fear.

"I will not, since you object. Yet it is hard. It is hard. I should like to know where you are to live, where to fix you when I think of you. But no matter. I do not blame you, Lilith. I blame myself. I ought never to have sought you out—never to have made myself known to you; but I could not help it. Oh, my child, I could not help it! You draw me, Lilith! You draw—you compel me!"

"You should not, for your own sake, have followed me, especially here to Washington, where there are so many foreigners, English among them—English who might recognize you. No; for your own safety, dear, you should not have followed me here," said Lilith,

speaking as gently, as tenderly, as her fright and anxiety would permit.

"I did not follow you here, darling. I did not even know that you were coming. I left Staunton to fulfill an engagement at Washington, and you took the train at Frosthill. Mr. Hereward is coming to take you away. I shall see you again. Good-bye, my child."

He was gone, and Hereward was at her side.

"You are shivering with cold, Lilith. But never mind. Come, get into the carriage, and we will soon be at our hotel," said Tudor Hereward, as he drew her trembling arm within his own, and led her to a well-cushioned, closed carriage, put her into it, and took his seat.

"To the —— Hotel," he said to the hackman.

And the carriage rolled off and turned into Pennsylvania Avenue.

Lilith was thankful for the darkness of the interior, which aided her crape vail in concealing her pale and anxious face from the observation of her husband.

A few more revolutions of the carriage-wheels brought them to their hotel.

They drew up at the ladies' entrance.

Hereward got down and handed his wife to the pavement, paused a moment to pay and discharge the carriage, and then led her into the house and up to the ladies' parlor.

"Remain here for a few moments, dear, while I go down to the office to register and get my key," he said, as he led her to a corner sofa and left the room.

The large parlor, or rather parlors—for there were several rooms *en suite*, and only divided by curtained and festooned arches—were occupied by ladies and gentlemen in evening dresses, reclining on sofas, standing in groups, or promenading in pairs; for the hotel dinner was over and the patrons of the house were all either receiving visitors in the general par-

lors, or were waiting the hour to start for some evening party or entertainment.

They took no notice of Lilith, who sat quite still in her corner, and who was only one of the frequent new arrivals, and might be but a transient guest of the house, for aught they knew to the contrary. Nor did she pay much attention to them, until a group of ladies and gentlemen, sitting a few feet from her, began to talk of one in whom she took a deep interest.

"Yes," said a gray-haired male gossip, "and the manner in which she led on that young Hereward was simply dishonorable! Why, every one thought they were engaged lovers, and were looking forward to receiving their wedding cards, when the announcement of her approaching marriage with Mr. Bruyin fell like a thunder-clap upon people."

"And poor young Hereward has never been the same man since her marriage," added a very stout and high-complexioned matron, with gold-powdered blonde hair, and in a rich evening dress. "He used to be one of our best society young men! Now he is never seen in public at all, except, indeed, in his seat in the House."

"Ah!— talk of his Satanic Majesty and—you know the result! Here comes the young fellow," said the gray-haired male gossip.

Hereward had entered at the most distant door fronting this group, and walked rapidly up to his young wife. He was not near enough to the group in question to be obliged to recognize or bow to them. He only stooped and whispered to Lilith:

"Come, my little love!" and led her from the room.

Hereward led his young wife down a brilliantly lighted hall, between rows of doors, some of them open, revealing glimpses of spacious and handsomely furnished apartments, to the elevator that took them

up to the top floor among the most plainly fitted and lowest-priced rooms in the house.

On landing he went and unlocked his own door and led Lilith into his den.

Lilith, accustomed to the spacious, comfortable apartments of her old-fashioned country home, involuntarily shrank back in dismay.

The room was small, dingy and fireless; the table and the faded red carpet strewn and littered with papers, and the uncurtained window covered with frost.

All this Lilith saw from the gas jet that stood opposite the open door, in the passage without; for there was no light in that cheerless room.

"Bah! what a beast I was to forget to order a fire lighted! There are no registers on this floor, dear!" said Hereward, as he felt in his pocket for his cigar-box of matches.

"I am very glad there are not, Tudor! I like an open fire so much better," replied Lilith, who had recovered from her first dismay at sight of the room.

"I will ring and have a fire made immediately. Don't take off your wraps, dear, for it is as cold here as it is outdoors," said Hereward, as at length he struck a match and lighted the gas.

The fuller light did but reveal the more clearly the cheerlessness of the dingy, untidy room.

To Lilith it looked really poverty-stricken, almost squalid.

"Sit down in that easy-chair, and wrap your mantle closely around you and keep still, and we shall have a fire presently," said Hereward, as he gave a vigorous pull to the bell.

At that moment there was a rap at the door, and to Mr. Hereward's "Come in" a hotel porter appeared.

"I want a fire here, Martin, as soon as possible.

And open the window to ventilate the room while you are kindling it."

"Yes, sir."

"Come, my little lady love, we will go downstairs," said Hereward, in a low voice, as he led Lilith out of the room, leaving the porter in possession.

They went down in the elevator to the dining-room floor, and again passed open or half-open doors, revealing glimpses of handsome suites of apartments.

And Lilith, who had not been used to any economy in her home life or while traveling with her foster-father, wondered why her husband did not occupy one of those fine suites of rooms instead of the poor chamber at the top of the house.

She was to learn the reason later.

They entered the dining-hall, and Hereward led her to a remote, unoccupied table, where they sat down and where they were immediately attended by a waiter, to whom Hereward, after consulting Lilith, gave his orders.

In a very few minutes they were served with hot coffee, stewed oysters, toast, and beefsteak on a chafing-dish.

Hereward, and even Lilith, who had scarcely broken her fast since morning, did full justice to these refreshments.

When their supper was over, and they had reached their attic chamber again, they found a fine fire of sea coal glowing in the grate, which had been freshly polished.

And this gave the room a much more habitable and even comfortable aspect than it had had before, though still the table and the floor were strewn and littered with papers.

"You can take off your bonnet and cloak and heavy shoes now, Lilith. You must be very tired of them. There is no wardrobe or closet in this apartment, dear;

but there is a row of hooks on the wall at the foot of the bed, where you can hang them. This is a poor place I have brought you to, my little lady love," said Hereward, who had already seated himself in his arm-chair at the table before the fire, and was beginning to examine the letters that had accumulated during the two days of his absence.

"Oh, I do not mind for myself, so that I am with you, Tudor, and so that you like to have me. You do like to have me, don't you, Tudor? I am not in your way, am I, even if the room is small?" she smilingly yet anxiously inquired.

"In my way, you darling child? No; but I wish you were better lodged."

"Oh, never mind about me. But yourself, Tudor? Is it proper that a man of your position should be so —humbly lodged as this?"

"My little love, the world of Washington knows that I am at a first-class hotel. They do not know, and need never know, that we are up on the fifth story. If people call, we receive them in the parlor down-stairs. We do not lose caste by lodging so near the clouds," he gayly replied.

"But for your comfort, Tudor."

"Comfort, dear, must be sacrificed to more important considerations. Yet I am sorry that you should suffer."

"Oh, never mind me, I say. But, Tudor, I thought— indeed I know from inference, that you used to have a very handsome suite of apartments in this same hotel, that you used to dress elegantly and go constantly into society. You used to be one of the most popular of society men—an æsthete, too; now, but for your public duties, you are an anchorite, an ascetic. Why is this, Tudor?" she inquired, not with any jealousy occasioned by what she had overheard in the parlor— for, as has been said, Hereward had given her his

whole confidence on the subject of his first-love story —but in unselfish interest in his comfort and welfare.

The change in his habits of which she spoke was true enough; and he determined to give her the explanation to which he thought she was entitled.

"My dear, I was about to tell you why I have changed my habits. In the first place, I cannot go into society so soon after my father's death, as you know."

"Of course, neither you nor I would feel like doing so. But had you not given up parties even before that sorrow?"

"No; your telegram found me at Senator S.'s masquerade ball. But let me explain, dear. In looking over my dear father's papers after his death, I found evidence that he had borrowed large sums of money at usurious interest, for which he had given his notes, and with which he had speculated and lost. Now, although the holders of my father's notes have no legal claim upon the estate, which came to me through my mother, and in which my father had only a life interest, yet I hold myself morally bound to take up those notes, to pay all my father's debts. And I am paying them out of my salary; for you know, dear, that the old plantation barely pays its own expenses. That is the reason why, when in Washington, we must live very cheaply."

"Oh, Tudor, Tudor! How much you have to bear for my sake! for I know my dear, dear foster-father entered into those speculations for the purpose of making some money to leave to me—not to leave me quite destitute. Oh, how shall I ever be able to make up to you for all that you have to bear on my account?"

"Hush, dear! You are making it up to me now. But to proceed. I have taken up all his notes, giving my own, secured by bond and mortgage on the old plantation. If I remain in office, as I fully expect to

do, I shall be able to take up all these notes in the course of a few years. If not, the woods must be cut down and the quarries worked on the estate, or, if necessary, even the half of the land must be sold to clear off the debts. Do not look so grave, little lady. We shall be here but a few months. Though this is the 'long session,' I think Congress will certainly adjourn by the first of June."

"If I cannot help you to-night, do not let me interrupt you by my talk. I will sit here and watch you, and you must go on with your work and forget my existence," said Lilith, as she drew her chair to the corner of the hearth, and ceased to speak.

"Your presence does not disturb me in the least, my darling; quite the contrary. I am only sorting papers. I shall select some of these letters for you to answer to-morrow, with penciled notes for guidance—some of the least important letters to begin with, by way of testing your ability, my little lady."

The clock on the steeple of a neighboring church was intoning twelve, when Hereward arose from his work, stretched his arms with a silent yawn, and said:

"What a thoughtless brute I am to have kept you up at this hour of the night, after a long journey, too! This is the sort of life you must expect to lead with me, Lilith. But you must never repeat this night's performance. You must go to bed at a proper time, however late I may have to sit up and work. Here, my little lady love. Here is a packet of letters with penciled guides, which you may try your ''prentice hand' upon to-morrow," he concluded, placing the parcel apart from the other papers.

CHAPTER XXIII

A BUSY BEE

"The blithest bee that ever wrought in hive."

THE next morning those gossips who were interested in the identity of the young lady in deep mourning who had appeared at the hotel in the company of Mr. Tudor Hereward, took an early opportunity of consulting the list of arrivals for the previous day, and found there an entry that took them somewhat by surprise:

"Hon. Tudor Hereward and wife, West Virginia."

"The discarded lover was not long in consoling himself," said one.

"A marvelous short time, I should say," added another.

"I wonder what she is like?" inquired a third.

"We shall see at breakfast. She will be at breakfast with him, of course," concluded a fourth.

But they were all out of their reckoning. They did not see either Mr. or Mrs. Tudor Hereward that morning.

The young couple, though they had retired so late, arose earlier than their fellow-boarders, and went down and got their breakfast when there was no one in the room except the waiters and some travelers who were to go off by some early train or boat.

And after that Tudor had escorted Lilith up to their room, and then left the hotel for the Capitol, where he had some business to do before the meeting of the House.

Lilith, left alone in the little, littered, disorderly room, looked around upon the scene.

The chambermaid had done her routine duty—had

made the bed, changed the towels, and so on—but the table and the carpet were strewn with a litter of letters and papers and pamphlets that it was none of her business to touch.

So first of all she went down on the carpet and gathered up all the torn and scattered papers, examining them one by one, lest she should destroy something of importance, and then cramming them down into the waste-paper basket, which, when closely packed and pressed down, was made to hold all the litter in the room.

She then rang the bell and sent the basket down by the porter to be emptied and returned.

Then she carefully laid aside the various files of letters, papers and pamphlets with which the writing-table was encumbered, took the cover off and shook it out of the open window, and, after dusting the table, covered it again, and replaced the files of papers in their accustomed spots.

She emptied the dusty and sticky inkstand of its thick ink, washed it under the running water of the washstand, and filled it with clear ink.

At length, when she had made everything clean and orderly, Lilith sat down and took up the file of letters that she was to answer by instructions, and have ready for Hereward to sign when he should return in the evening.

She went through the whole file, examining them to survey the field of her work before beginning.

The first letter proved to be from a constituent of Mr. Hereward, who wanted the post-office at Hayville. The penciled line of instruction was:

"Reply courteously that the place is promised to another party. Regrets, etc."

The second letter was an inquiry concerning the bill for the new tariff. The line of directions was:

"Write that the bill will be presented on the fifth instant."

The third letter was an invitation to speak at a certain political meeting in a neighboring city. The instructions:

"Answer with thanks and regrets. Prior engagements the plea."

And so through the file of twenty-three letters, with short lines of instructions to guide her answers, Lilith went, with growing confidence and satisfaction in her task.

"Why, this is all as plain as copying. Nothing is left to my doubtful discretion, therefore nothing is left to puzzle me. I shall easily get through before Tudor returns."

Lilith worked on and on, her cheeks flushed and her eyes bright with pleasure in her labor of love.

She shrank, at first thought, from going down to the dining-room alone; but, knowing that she must overcome her rustic shyness, sooner or later, she felt that she had better take the plunge at once.

Lilith dispatched the luncheon, returned to her room, and resumed her work until she had completed her task at about half-past five o'clock.

She was gathering up the letters to bind them together when her husband entered the room and walked to the table.

She looked up with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks.

"How pretty you are, my little lady love! How have you got on since I left you?" he inquired, as he took the bright face between his hands and kissed her forehead.

"Finely, Tudor. Have you time now to glance over

these letters and sign them? Or are you too tired?" she inquired, rising and resigning her place to him.

"I am not yet tired, and I have half an hour at my disposal before dinner. I will glance over them now," he answered, as he sank into the chair that she had left.

He was a very rapid reader, especially of these letters written in a clear hand. In fifteen minutes he had run through and signed the whole lot of twenty-three letters, Lilith watching the process with anxiety that gradually changed to delight as she saw him sign and seal letter after letter without demur.

"Your day's work has saved me a night's work, my little lady love," he said, as at last he arose and gave her a kiss—the all-sufficient reward for all her efforts.

"I am so glad to hear you say so, Tudor? But is the work well done?" she anxiously inquired.

"Very well done. Much better than necessary," he replied.

"How better than necessary?" she asked.

"The letters, especially those refusing requests made, are needlessly courteous and lengthy."

"Oh, Tudor! But when you are obliged to disappoint people, is it not right to express yourself as kindly and politely as possible?"

Lilith made a more careful toilet, perhaps, than usual for the public hotel dinner—putting on her rich black silk dress, trimmed with crape and jet, with a slender jet hair-band on her black ringlets, and a jet necklace and jet bracelets on her fair neck and arms.

Tudor, when he had refreshed his toilet a little, took her down to the dining-room, where all the guests of the house were assembled or assembling, mostly in full dress.

Mr. and Mrs. Hereward were met by one of the waiters, who escorted them to a vacant table and gave

them two seats, which were henceforth to be their own.

During that long and tedious dinner, with its many and slowly served courses, Mr. Hereward, always a conspicuous figure in any assembly, and his young wife, in her lovely, childlike beauty and her deep mourning dress, gradually attracted the attention of the people within their line of view, and occasioned much remark.

"They will be in the parlors this evening, I suppose. For though Hereward has not honored the parlors much of late, of course he must bring his wife down. She cannot stay in her room forever."

So went the talk.

But Hereward did not bring his wife into the parlors that evening, for on putting the question to her, she shrank from the idea of entering them and requested to return to their room.

"For I know you have work to do that will keep you up half the night, Tudor, and I wish to help you—to prove to you how much I can help you. And, Tudor, if you really wish to make me happy, you will let me help you as much as I please, for there is nothing in the world I like to do so well."

The protracted dinner was at an end, and they left the table and turned to leave the room, as many of their fellow-guests were doing.

On their way down the long dining-room Mr. Hereward was accosted by some of his acquaintances.

"Glad to see you back, Hereward!" exclaimed a stout, red-faced, gray-haired, soldierly-looking old man.

"Thank you, general. I am glad to find myself here," replied the young man, and he would have passed on with his young wife.

"Mrs. Hereward, I presume," said the general, bowing politely, and not to be balked of an introduction.

"Yes, Mrs. Hereward—General Abbotson, my dear," said the young man, going through the presentation with intentional formality.

The parties bowed and the gallant general professed himself as honored and delighted.

In the midst of his compliments he was interrupted by the coming up of a tall, thin, black-whiskered, grave-looking gentleman of midde age, who held out his hand with a—

"How do you do, Hereward? When did you arrive?"

"Only last evening. I hope you are recovering, senator."

"Yes, thank you, I am better."

"Will you permit me to present you to my wife?—Senator Barminster, my dear."

The lady and gentleman bowed.

"Mr. Hereward, I was pleased to see you at your post this morning. We cannot spare you until this question of the new tariff shall be disposed of," said a rather solemn-looking, bald-headed, round-bodied old gentleman, joining the group.

"Thank you, judge. Mrs. Hereward—Judge Burleigh, my dear."

The parties bowed in recognition of this introduction, and the judge was addressing some words of commonplace compliment to the little lady, when others came up, and, in short, it was nearly half an hour before Hereward could escape from his friends, and take his wife up to her room, scarcely knowing whether he was pleased or displeased at the sensation caused by her beauty—perhaps a little of both on opposite accounts.

"What are you going to do to-night, Tudor?" she inquired, when they had reached their apartment, which was no longer a "den," but had been turned by her taste and tidiness into a "snuggery."

"Look over these letters which have come during the day, and fix some for you to answer to-morrow."

"Ah! that is well."

"There are but few; afterwards I must work at my speech on the tariff."

"What can I do for you, Tudor, while you are looking over those letters?"

"Have you no needlework?" he inquired, without looking up from his employment of sorting his letters, separating the "wheat from the chaff," so to speak.

"No; not even the everlasting, irrepressible, inevitable shirt-button to sew on. The very last fugitive one was captured and secured while we were at the Cliffs."

"No fancy-work?"

"No—that is, yes—lots of beading, braiding, embroidering, and the like. But I do not mean to do 'fancy' work when I see you at real work, in which I can help you."

Hereward dropped a despised letter from some poor office-seeker into the basket, and turned to look wistfully at his wife.

No; there was no threat of future rebellion or obstinacy in that upraised, beaming young face. But he saw that she was really eager to be of use, and, indeed, he was in need of her help, but had not liked to take it; he had feared to weary her.

He lifted up a pile of manuscript that was a perfect labyrinth of interlineations, erasions and interpolations.

"Do you think you can decipher and copy this?" he asked.

"Well," she said, looking at it critically, "the Egyptian hieroglyphics might be easier, but I like to grapple with a difficulty. Yes, I will take this task, if you please, Tudor."

And neither worker spoke to the other until ten o'clock, when Lilith looked up and said:

"I have copied all that you have given me. Have you more?"

Without looking up from his absorbing work, he pushed towards her half a dozen more pages of labyrinthine hieroglyphics, which she began to read and copy in a fair, clear text.

When she had got through with these she did not disturb him again, but quietly took up the two or three more pages that he had laid down. And after copying them, she took up the last one just as he had laid it down, and stretched his arms over his head with a sigh of relief.

"You do not mean to say that you have got through, Lilith?" he inquired, as he looked at her pile of fairly transcribed manuscript.

"All but this last half page, which I shall finish in a few minutes," she replied, driving away as fast as she could with her engrossing pen.

Tudor Hereward arose and walked about the room, threw up the window, and looked out.

"It is snowing," he said, as he lowered the sash again. "The ground and the tops of the houses are quite white."

Lilith did not reply or look up.

The neighboring church clock intoned eleven.

"There! Put up your work, Lilith. I really cannot allow you to overtask yourself," he said, moving to her side.

"There, it is done! The last line, word, letter, is written. And the 'great speech' is ready for delivery," she gayly said, as she arose and put the manuscript in his hands.

"Thank you, Lilith, thank you, dear little girl! This is very clearly written, indeed. It is as easy to read as good print."

"You may thank my trainer for that."

"And who was he, or she? Your school writing master or mistress?"

"Our father. When I copied for him he used to tell me that the very first object in writing was to be read; and that, therefore, the text should be very clear. And now, I think, Tudor, if your arguments are as clear and forcible as the text in which they are there inscribed, the new tariff bill which they support must pass, and by a large majority—not that I believe in your bill myself," she said, shaking her black, curly head at him.

"What, Lilith! Have you an opinion on this subject?" laughed Hereward.

"I had a very decided one. I admit that your reasoning has just shaken my faith a little."

"And what were those opinions?" he inquired, with the air of a man amusing himself with a child.

"I consider your tariff a huge national selfishness!"

"Lilith! Did you get that opinion from my father's teachings?"

"Oh, no! He, like you, was a protectionist. We used to have it hot and heavy! But he never could convince me that the tariff was not a monstrous national selfishness, or that selfishness was any better in a nation than in an individual."

"Were there any other knotty problems in politics that you and my father discussed?"

"And differed about? Oh, yes, the extradition treaty. We used to have warm debates over that! But he could not convince me that a fugitive should not have some place of the Lord's earth where he could be safe from pursuit."

"There should be no foot of ground on earth where a criminal should be safe from capture."

"I don't know, Tudor! Cain, the first murderer, fled. He was not pursued and brought back. In the

middle ages there was the sanctuary of the church. The worst criminal, flying to the altar for refuge, was safe from the highest mortal authority. I do not quite think that our extradition is any improvement on all that!—especially in the light of Christian charity."

"Lilith, you talk like a child, my dear! Fugitives from justice should be caught and brought back even from the nethermost parts of the earth, if to those regions they have fled," said Hereward, with stern gravity.

"Suppose a man should be wrongfully accused, wrongfully convicted of a capital crime, wrongfully condemned to death, and should make his escape, and fly hither to this country as to a city of refuge. How horrible the law that would send him—a guiltless man—back to die a felon's death!" exclaimed Lilith, in such strong emotion, that her husband looked at her more intently than ever.

"Lilith," he said, "you must not let your feelings dominate your reason, my dear. You really speak as if you had some vital personal interest in this question! As if some one very near and dear to yourself was in this case—a fugitive from justice, or injustice, as you put it!"

Lilith turned her head away to hide the deadly paleness that came like a cold wave over her face.

Lilith soon recovered from her temporary distress, and by the time they had finished supper she was chatting and smiling as before the subject of the extradition treaty had come up between them.

"I have a prize in you, my little girl! I have a priceless treasure in you!" whispered Tudor Hereward, as they went upstairs together.

Lilith said nothing. She was thinking:—"If it were not for that secret—oh, that secret, which I am keeping from him!—from him who keeps no secret from me!—we should be so happy! So very happy!"

CHAPTER XXIV

LILITH AT THE CAPITOL

"LILITH, dear," said Tudor Hereward to his young wife, the next morning, when they had returned to their room after their early breakfast, "the day is so fine and the walking so good, for the snow that fell last night is crisp on the ground, that I think you should go out. Suppose you put on your wraps and let me take you to the Capitol?"

"But the letters that you have fixed for me to answer, Tudor?"

"There are only about half a dozen. They can be disposed of in an hour, after we come home this evening."

"Then I would like to go, thank you, Tudor."

She put on her seal-skin jacket and hat and drew on her black kid gloves, and they went downstairs and left the hotel.

This was the first time in which Lilith had seen the broad avenue by daylight.

"It is the finest avenue I have ever seen in my life; but the buildings are not worthy of its magnificent scope," said Lilith.

"Time was, in the early days of the city, as the old inhabitants tell, when this avenue at this season was but a muddy road, flanked by a few scattered and irregular houses of wood, or red brick, and of only one or two stories in height, with here and there, at long distances, a three-story brick that looked quite magnificent by contrast; but that must have been full fifty years ago. Now we have some very handsome edifices," replied Hereward.

"But still, as a whole, the buildings are not worthy of the magnificent breadth and sweep of the vista," persisted Lilith.

This remark brought them to the gates of the Capitol grounds, and as they entered, Hereward was joined by several Congressional friends, whom he, in turn, introduced to his young wife.

They went up the long, weary ascent of broad stone steps leading from terrace to terrace till they reached the Capitol building.

Hereward took Lilith into the handsome library, found her a seat and said:

"Amuse yourself here until I return. I have to go on a committee, but I will come for you before the house meets and take you to the Ladies' Gallery."

And he went away.

Lilith arose and went to one of the tables upon which piles of large illustrated volumes lay.

She sat down at the table and opened one of the volumes.

It was the CLANS OF SCOTLAND, richly and profusely illustrated in colors, showing in the most brilliant hues the tartans of the various chiefs.

This so absorbed the attention of the young lady that, in turning page after page and comparing one chieftain's individuality with that of another, and with reading the letter-press descriptions, which were interspersed with historical notes and anecdotes, Lilith forgot the passage of time, until she felt a hand laid on her bent head and heard a voice in her ear:

"Lilith, darling! I was here for hours, yesterday, hoping that you might chance to come in, as every stranger in the city does."

All the bright, enthusiastic interest in the girl's face faded out, leaving it pale with dread at the sight of the dark, handsome visage of Mr. Alfred Ancillon bending over her.

"Oh, why do you seek me out? Oh, my dear, if you knew how you frighten me, how you endanger and compromise me, you would not do it! You would

spare me," she breathed, in a hurried, anxious, pleading tone.

"Lilith, my child, you are all that I have in this world to care for, and you are all who care for me. Have you no natural affection for me, Lilith? None, my child, none?" he pleaded, fixing on her those large, dark, unutterably mournful eyes that were so full of piteous prayer.

"Oh, yes! I have! I have! Before I ever saw your face, when I only saw your picture, my heart was instinctively drawn to you. And when I learned your tragic story from those old letters my heart ached, ached for you. And when, later on, I learned all that you were and are to me, I found full warrant and justification for the love I felt and the pain I suffered. Oh, yes, dear, I have natural affection, but I have duties as well—duties, ah, yes! duties that are incompatible with this secret that I am keeping from my husband. Oh, my dear, this secret is the only thorn in a very flowery path of life. But I suppose all paths must have some thorns," she added, with a deep sigh.

"And so I am the only thorn in your rosy path, eh, Lilith?" he inquired.

"Oh, no, no, not you, but the secret I am keeping from my husband, that weighs on my conscience and warns me of evil to come. I try not to think of it. And I do forget it when I am at work," she said.

"Lilith, it is well I bound you by a solemn oath not to reveal this secret, or your tender conscience, your delicate sense of duty, would lead you to a course that would send me back to—"

"Oh, hush! hush! Your words stab me. No, I would never betray you. Come what will of weal or woe, I will never betray your secret. But oh! what a strait—" she suddenly ceased, as if feeling as if it were ungenerous and even cruel to dwell upon the pain-

fully false position in which his misfortunes had placed her.

"How do you do, Mrs. Hereward? I am happy to see you looking so well this morning."

It was the gray-haired judge whom Hereward had introduced to his wife on the preceding evening, who had now come up to speak to her.

Mr. Alfred Ancillon bowed with the grace that was peculiar to him, and silently left.

"Thank you, judge; I hope you are well," responded Lilith, who was glad of the relief his presence gave her.

The judge bowed, took a seat at the table, and immediately entered upon the small talk with which high official dignitaries in Washington refresh themselves when in company with ladies whom they suppose to be incapable of understanding anything better.

But when he found that Lilith had never heard Patti sing, or seen Neilson play, or read Ginx's Baby, or attended any of the public receptions, and in consequence had no opinion to give about any of them, he began to consider Tudor Hereward's young wife as a very rustic though a very, very pretty little party.

While they talked, the young husband himself entered the library, and came up to them, exchanged a greeting and a few words with the judge, and then took the arm of his wife, who arose to join him, and conducted her through all the lobbies, halls and corridors that lay between the Congressional Library and the Ladies' Gallery of the House of Representatives.

Here he found her a comfortable seat in the front row, and then he left her and went down to take his own place in the hall below.

Some bill relating to ports and harbors was before

the House, and a heated debate ensued, in which Hereward took an active part.

Lilith, sitting in the gallery, which was now crowded with other ladies, soon grew so accustomed to the new scene and subdued light as to see and hear with perfect distinctness, although the debate was not very attractive to her. She was not interested in ports and harbors. Only when Hereward spoke did she listen attentively. At other times, if the truth must be told, the poor child was bored almost to death, and wished herself anywhere else on the face of this weary earth than in the Ladies' Gallery in the House of Representatives of this great and glorious Republic. No words can express how tediously the hours of the afternoon passed.

Lilith registered a vow that she would never, no, never, enter the House of Representatives again, unless it should be some occasion when Hereward was to present a bill or make a speech.

It was late in the afternoon, and there was a lull in the storm consequent upon the temporary withdrawal of several members from the hall, when Hereward left his seat and came up into the Ladies' Gallery to speak to Lilith.

"Are you tired and hungry, dear?" he inquired.

"Yes, VERY," answered Lilith, with emphatic frankness.

"What did you think of the debate?"

"I hated it!"

"So did I. Come, dear, we will go downstairs to the restaurant and get something to eat and drink. I see that fasting is not a means of grace with you, and I know it is not with me," he said, as he gave her his hand to assist her to extricate herself from the labyrinth of fashionable costumes and velvet-cushioned benches in which she had got involved.

And they continued their way down to the saloon, where they partook of a well relished dinner.

"Now, dear, perhaps you would rather return to the hotel. I must go back to my place; but I can take you down and place you in an omnibus first, if you wish."

"Oh, no, Tudor! I would far rather walk, if you please," she said.

He took her out upon the western terrace and down the many flights of broad stone steps, from terrace to terrace, and along the avenue to the west gate, where he was to leave her.

He turned to walk back to the House, and she walked on up Pennsylvania Avenue.

A great many people, drawn out by the fineness of the late winter afternoon, were on the sidewalks.

On reaching her room at the hotel, she took off her wraps and put them away.

Then, as it was growing dusk, she lighted her lamp, placed it on the table, and sat down to answer those letters that Hereward had marked for her.

It took her but little more than an hour to complete her work. Sitting alone, with two hours to wait before the return of her husband, she looked around the room to see what she could do to make it more attractive and comfortable. She had already greatly improved it, by reducing it to order and tidiness.

But now she saw much more that might be done. And she took pencil and paper and made a list of articles that she meant to go out and purchase the next day.

Lilith had a small hoard of money of her own; for her beloved foster-father, even in his tightest straits, had never stinted her, or even allowed her to know of the manner in which he had denied himself for her sake.

Now she was glad of this money, which gave her the power to make this cheap room comfortable and at-

tractive to him whose well-being she valued more than her own life.

All that the loving heart could suggest that could add to the comfort and beauty of this room, without encumbering it, was thought of and set down.

Some might ask: Why could not the young wife have turned over those few hundred dollars that she had saved to her husband?

Lilith herself had wished to do this, but she dared not try it. She knew that Tudor Hereward would no sooner have accepted the offer of her little fund—the gift of his father—than he would have swindled a baby. His pride would, or at least might, have construed such an offer into an offence.

Lilith had just finished her list and put it into her pocket-book, when the door opened and Tudor Hereward entered, looking so tired that Lilith wished from her heart she had the easy resting-chair and the apparatus for making him a quick cup of the good tea that he liked so much, and that she was determined to have the next day.

"The House adjourned earlier than you expected? I am so glad, Tudor," she said, as he dropped wearily into the wooden arm-chair.

"Yes," he answered, reaching out his hand to the letters that had come for him during the day; "and here is work enough to keep me busy all the evening."

"The work you left for me is all done, Tudor, and ready for your signature," she said, blithely.

"You are my good fairy, darling," he replied, earnestly but wearily, as he took up the pile of letters, and began to glance over and sign them.

"Not a word to alter in any of them, Lilith," he said, as he sealed the last one. "Now these are ready for the mail."

He rang and dispatched them by a messenger, and then turned to the new letters.

"If you mark them one at a time, and give them to me as you read them, I can answer some while you are examining others," suggested Lilith.

"Very well, dear. I will do so," assented Hereward.

And working so in unison, they got through their business at an earlier hour than on the preceding evening.

They went down and took supper about ten o'clock, leaving the last batch of letters in the hotel office, to go by the first mail the next day.

The next morning the sun rose brilliantly on a snow-clad, frosted city.

"There is really no work left for you to do to-day, my little busy bee! How shall you employ or amuse yourself while I am gone? Or would you like to go again to the Capitol?" inquired Hereward, when, after they had breakfasted, he was about to leave the hotel.

"Oh, no, thank you, Tudor. You have heard my opinion about that. I do not mean to go to the House again until your bill is taken up and I go to hear your great speech," replied Lilith.

"Then how will you pass the time?"

"Oh, I have some shopping to do and some domestic matters to attend to," replied Lilith.

Hereward raised his brows in droll helplessness.

"Those are mysteries that I cannot pretend to fathom," he said, with a serio-comic air, as he kissed her good-bye and left the room.

Soon after this, Lilith put on her fur hat and jacket, and taking her portemonnaie and her list, she went out to make her purchases.

Midwinter is not a very busy time with upholsterers, so that Lilith found no difficulty in getting her curtains made up and her resting-chair and hassock made ready and put in place by the stipulated time.

By five o'clock in the afternoon the plain little room

was transfigured, as by a magician's wand, into a beautiful and attractive apartment, whose prevailing hue was a rich warm crimson.

And Lilith sat down in the glow, to wait with child-like impatience for the return of Tudor.

Hours passed and Hereward did not return.

When the clock struck eight Lilith went again to the window to look out.

The electric light still radiated in the black sky above the dome, with a white splendor passing strange, beautiful and suggestive.

"The House is still in session. They must be having a heated debate or a long speech. I hope for the sake of the desks it is a long speech," said Lilith to herself as she turned away from the window to—face Tudor Hereward, who had quietly entered the room.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a little start. "I—thought— Did you leave before the House adjourned?"

"No, dear. The House has adjourned. The light that you were watching still burns for the Senate, which is still in session," replied Hereward, turning to drop into his customary wooden arm-chair, but finding a handsome and most comfortable crimson cushioned "sleepy hollow" ready to receive his wearied frame.

He dropped into it without a word, and looked around the handsome, cozy room.

Lilith, smiling and delighted, watched him in his surprise and enjoyment.

"What fairy has been at work here to-day?" he inquired, still looking round to note all the changes.

"No fairy, nothing so aerial; but only your little, homely brownie, Tudor," replied Lilith, in delight.

"My darling, how did you manage all this?" he inquired, in perplexity.

"I had some funds saved up from the allowance our

dear father used to make me, and I spent a small portion of them on these comforts. It does not take much to make a room like this comfortable, Tudor."

"And you spent your own money—money that you might have spent on dress, or personal adornings?"

"Our father's, rather, Tudor. And why should I save it, when I have you to give me everything I want? I shall freely ask you for everything I want, Tudor, from a hat to a pair of boots, for I know that you will gladly give me all I require," she said, as she went and stood at his side. She was even yet too shy to kiss him of her own accord, but she laid her face against his cheek, for an instant, and the man's heart responded, and he drew the little head down upon his bosom and caressed it in that passion of pity and tenderness which he felt for her because he could not love her as he had loved the woman who, as compared to her, was but as dross to refined gold.

"She knows no difference, poor little one, and if I only pet her a little and permit her to worship me a great deal, I shall make her perfectly happy."

All these thoughts passed swiftly through his mind during the few moments that he held her head upon his bosom.

"Are you very tired, Tudor? But I see you are," she said, looking up into his face.

"I am resting delightfully, but with a consciousness of undeserved happiness, Lilith," he answered, gravely.

She looked puzzled, but presently asked him:

"Will you go down to dinner? It must be at its height now."

"I dined at the Capitol restaurant. I hope that you have not waited?"

"Oh, no; that is, I lunched very heartily after I came in from my shopping expedition, about three o'clock, and so, of course, I could not eat anything

now. But I know what to do," she said, gayly, as she arose and went to work over a little gas-stove and kettle.

He turned to his letters and was soon absorbed in the business of reading them, and separating the wheat from the chaff—the letters that must be placed on file and answered, from those that might be thrown into the waste-basket and forgotten.

Presently Lilith brought him a fragrant cup of tea, in a fine china cup and saucer, with a silver tea spoon.

"Lilith, darling!" he said, looking up at her, as he took the cup from her hand.

"I know your thirst for really good tea, Tudor, and how much it refreshes you while you are at work, and I know that we cannot get good tea downstairs," she said, standing over him.

"This is delicious! this is restorative! The elixir of life, my Lilith!" he breathed, with satisfaction, as he drank of the blessed cup that "cheers but not inebriates."

"Yes, Tudor, a little woman must keep house or play at keeping house, even if it be on so small a scale as making tea for her husband in a hotel attic," said Lilith.

"A little woman like you, my Lilith! I wonder if you know yourself—if you realize all that you are. But I am sure you do not," he said, looking wistfully at her.

"I know that I wish to be all that you would have me, Tudor," she answered, as she quietly took his cup and refilled it.

"Little one, are you satisfied with me? Am I all that you would have me to be?—to yourself, I mean. Do I make you happy?" he inquired, tenderly, anxiously.

"Oh, yes, Tudor!" she said, raising her truthful, dark eyes to his. "You make me very, very happy."

And forgotten, for the time being, was the secret that was the only shadow of her life.

CHAPTER XXV

DRAWN TO THE BRINK

The eventful day came at last when the bill for the establishment of the new tariff was to be taken up by the House of Representatives, and the Hon. Tudor Hereward was to deliver his speech in its support.

The rumor of an expected speech from the rising statesman and eloquent orator was always sure to draw a crowd to the Hall of Representatives.

From an early hour the hall was crowded and every seat in the Ladies' Gallery was filled.

Lilith was there, of course. Much as she disliked the crowded galleries and the noisy debates, she was present in a front seat. She would not have missed hearing Tudor's speech on any account.

She listened to every word of it, and although the largeness of her sympathies made her differ, at heart, from the principles it supported, yet she gloried in its power and triumphed in its success—for it was a signal success. Late that evening, when the vote was taken, the bill was passed by an overwhelming majority.

That evening, after the young pair had returned to their hotel and dined, Tudor took Lilith into the ladies' parlor.

"You have been here a week, my little lady love, and have never spent an evening with the guests of the house. I cannot permit you to immure yourself so entirely. This evening, too, some friends are coming to meet me—"

"To congratulate you, Tudor?"

"Well, to talk with me, at all events, and I wish to introduce them to you—if I have your permission, my lady."

" 'Permission?' Oh, Tudor!"

"Certainly, Mrs. Hereward," he answered, with a sort of playful gravity; "I should never present any of my male acquaintances to you without your permission."

"As if you could possibly bring any one to me to whom I could possibly object! Will you now take *carte blanche* to bring any one you please to me, Tudor?"

He laughed and kissed her hand, and they entered the parlor.

The appearance of Hereward seemed the signal for the approach of all his friends and acquaintances. Even before he had found a seat for Lilith, and while he stood with her hand resting on his arm in the middle of the floor, they were surrounded.

It was an ovation.

The forensic success of the afternoon was crowned by the social triumph of the evening.

Lilith in her plain, simple mourning dress, but with her dark eyes glowing and her delicate cheeks flushing with delight in the honors of her husband, seemed more beautiful than ever in the sight of all.

Hours later, when the young couple left the parlors and went up to their own room, Hereward asked Lilith how she had enjoyed this, the first evening she had spent in company.

"Oh, very, very much indeed, Tudor. How every one lauded your speech!" she answered, looking proudly up to him.

"Yes—to my very face! Rather embarrassing, don't you think, little lady?"

"To you, I suppose, Tudor. But they were so very

much in earnest!" she said, her lovely face beaming with love and pride.

The next day was Saturday.

As Tudor Hereward walked down the avenue his eyes were attracted by a huge, flaming poster, higher, broader and brighter than ever a poster had been before.

However his eyes might have been "holden" all the week, he could not help seeing this obtrusive object, that set forth that this Saturday night would witness the positively last appearance of the world-renowned artist, Mr. Alfred Ancillon, in his unrivaled rôle of Mazeppa, or the Wild Horse of Tartary.

" 'Ancillon?' Is not that the name of the fellow that was playing down at Frosthill during the Christmas holidays, and who afterwards got storm-bound at the Cliffs? Certainly."

"What do you think of that by way of an advertisement, eh, Hereward?" said an acquaintance, joining him.

"Almost actionable as an obstruction of the highway, I should think," laughed Tudor.

They walked on together.

"Have you seen the man play?" inquired Evans.

"I? No! I did not even know of such an actor in the city," truthfully answered Hereward.

"Why, he has been here playing all the week. And I tell you he is worth seeing. He is really a fine tragic actor as well as an accomplished equestrian; has gifts you don't often see combined in one person. That is the wonder of him. You had better go and see him to-night, Hereward. It is your last chance."

"Perhaps I will, Evans."

And the men parted. Evans turned north to go to the Baltimore and Ohio Railway depot, to meet a relative who was coming to meet him, and Hereward continued his way eastward toward the Capitol. He

thought of what he had just heard, and of what, two weeks before, he had heard in the railroad car on his way to Frosthill, and the longer he thought of these subjects the more inclined he felt to go to the Varieties and see this Monsieur Alfred Ancillon for himself.

Who has lived long in this world of vicissitudes, accidents, catastrophes, and failed to recognize the appalling truth that men—even good and true men—often walk blindfold along the very brink of a precipice hanging over the gulf of perdition?

What demon was it that was leading Tudor Hereward to the Varieties?

CHAPTER XXVI

"THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER"

THAT Saturday evening, when Tudor Hereward found himself alone with his young wife in their apartment after dinner, instead of sitting down to his correspondence, as usual, he went to the dressing glass and began to brush his hair.

"Lilith," he said, without looking towards her, for he was still busy with his toilet, "I am going out this evening. Do you mind, dear?"

Lilith did mind—she could not help minding that she should be without his companionship all the long winter evening.

"I am sure I ought not to mind, Tudor, for we have been here almost a fortnight and you have never left me alone for a single evening.

"Where are you going this evening, if I may ask the question? to a political caucus? Don't answer if you don't like to," she said, gayly.

"I have no secrets from you, Lilith, dear. I am going to the theatre."

She winced when he said he had "no secrets" from her; but she recovered herself, and said:

"Oh! to the theatre. I thought you never went to such places. I thought you rather despised such entertainments as mere waste of time," she smiled.

"I do consider them waste of time, and never go to them, as a rule; but rules, you know, permit exceptions, and I have been persuaded by Evans, of the *Reflector*, to make an exception to my rule this evening, and go with him to the theatre to see the prodigy of the age, or some such miracle."

"Oh! to see the great Italian in some Shakesperian rôle, at the National Theatre?"

"No, Lilith. If I were going there I should ask you to accompany me; but I am going where I cannot take you."

Lilith's face fell.

"I am going to a circus, or something like it; a highly sensational, spectacular drama, entitled Mazeppa, or the Wild Horse of Tartary, founded on Lord Byron's poem of the same name, in which the title rôle is to be played by Monsieur Alfred Ancillon, a celebrated universal genius, if we are to believe the handbills and posters. But, really, he is said by Evans, the dramatic critic of the *Reflector*, and by other competent judges, to be quite wonderful; equally gifted in tragedy, comedy, opera and circus. So I have been prevailed upon to go and see this phenomenal Monsieur Alfred Ancillon."

It was well that he was engaged in drawing on a very tight kid glove, and so was not looking at her when he spoke.

She made no reply. She had gone pale as death, and was looking into the fire as she stood on the rug.

"By the way, he is the same fellow who was playing

down at Frosthill when that young cub, Hilary, came to the Cliffs to invite you to go and see him, in three characters in one evening, I think he said. You have seen him, Lilith?"

It was disingenuous to put this question when he knew well that Lilith had seen the man; but doubtless he believed himself justified in putting it.

Lilith hesitated, and answered, slowly:

"I—have never seen him play. I—have seen him, though. He—was storm-bound for a week at the Cliffs, as—you may have heard," she concluded, commanding her voice by an effort greater than she had ever made, or ever had occasion to make before.

"Yes, I heard. Not a very fitting person to be your guest, I think; but then, of course, being a storm-bound traveler, you could not turn him out of doors; and being a white man, you could not turn him over to the negro servants for society and entertainment. You could not help yourself, my poor little Lilith, and I will not criticize you. But what sort of a fellow is this Monsieur Alfred Ancillon? Of what age? Of what complexion? Of what behavior?"

"Oh, he was a man of middle age—and of very dark complexion—and of rather odd manners."

"A swarthy old man, with ill manners. Not a gentleman, in fact," was Hereward's silent and most satisfactory translation of his young wife's description.

"Well, good-night, my little lady love. Amuse yourself as well as you can while I am away. I shall return by eleven. And I shall not leave you alone another evening while we stay in Washington." He stooped, took her lovely little face between his hands and kissed her, seeing—without seeing—how pale she had grown.

In another moment he had gone.

He was joined by Evans in the reading-room, and

they walked up the avenue and entered the theatre together.

Evans had secured two stalls in the middle of the first row of orchestra seats, and they took their places just as the music ceased and the curtain rose, discovering a mediæval boudoir, a lady and a page seated—she on a cushioned divan, he on a rug at her feet. She was young, pretty, and richly dressed in the Polish costume of the period; he was a princely youth seemingly of not more than seventeen or eighteen years, of surpassing beauty, grace and elegance, all enhanced by the splendid court dress of the royal pages.

As he sat at the feet of the gracefully reclining lady he held a book open on his knee; but he was not then reading to his fair mistress; his glorious eyes were raised to hers with the fire of adoring worship.

The thunder of applause with which the scene was greeted surprised Hereward so much that he turned and inquired of his neighbor:

"Evans, what on earth is the matter with them?"

"'Matter!' Why they go mad directly they see Ancillon."

"Ancillon? Where is Ancillon?"

"Why there, before your eyes, reading poetry to the contessa."

"That Ancillon? That boy Ancillon? Why, he is a mere youth!"

"He is young; there is no doubt about that. And as beautiful as Adonis, or Narcissus, or any other of the mythic youths and lady-killers whom the jealousy of the elder gods sacrificed."

"And she told me he was an elderly man, swarthy and awkward!" thought Hereward, unconsciously distorting Lilith's description from the very different words that she had used, to the interpretation that he had put upon them.

"And this is no stage illusion," he continued, torturing himself—"no stage art that undertakes to make an old fellow young; but which never quite succeeds. No, I have too good sight, and sit too near, to be deceived. Those eyes owe nothing to art. Those shadows are really cast by the long eyelashes, they are not smutches of charcoal. No, the evidence of my senses shows me plainly that this man whom Lilith, whom my trusted wife told me was old and vulgar, is really young and elegant. Nor is it only the evidence of my own senses that I have. The negroes at the Cliffs spoke of their mistress' guest, in their peculiar phrase, as a 'young youth.' The gossips in the train spoke of him as a 'young fellow.' Good Heaven! could there have been any ground, the least ground, for their slanders? Oh, Heaven! if Lilith is false at heart I shall never be able to trust woman again. The thought!"

"Hereward, you seem quite absorbed in this scene. You have not taken your eyes off Mazeppa since the curtain rose. What do you think of him? Did I exaggerate?" inquired Evans, breaking in upon his companion's reverie.

"Don't speak to me, if you please, Evans," replied Tudor.

"Well, I won't disturb your enjoyment again. They say that it is impossible to decide in what rôle this artist excels; but I think the part in which he really surpasses himself as well as all others, is that of the lover. Why, that fellow's eyes and voice would beguile a Peri out of Paradise! Just look at him now!"

"Pray do not talk to me, Evans."

"Well, there, I have done! It is a mistake to talk to one who wants to listen, and who is so interested as you are!" assented the reporter, who subsided into silence, while Hereward relapsed into his bitter

reverie, jealously watching the graceful, brilliant page reclining at the feet of the countess, gazing up into her face, and pouring all the ardor and eloquence of youthful love through the dark splendor of his eyes.

"I wonder how they passed that *tête-à-tête* week at Cloud Cliffs. Did he sit at her feet and read poetry to her, in that rich, melodious voice of his? Did he lift his eyes to her with the expression that burns in them now for the count palatine's wife?"

"Heavens and earth! If I thought so, I should go mad! Lilith is just at the inexperienced, romantic, sentimental age when a young girl is most easily impressed by beauty, genius and poetry.

"Great heaven! What shall I do? I cannot think Lilith wilfully, actually unfaithful; but if she be untrue in heart, as her deception of me to-night would lead me to believe, I never wish to see her face again.

"I can no longer confide in her as I have done; but neither will I condemn her until further evidence. I will never, if I can command myself, speak to her of this man again. But I will watch and observe! Meantime, my little lady, you shall be my private secretary, since you like the office; but no more to me until this cloud which your deception has raised about us is cleared away."

Hereward's bitter mental monologue was interrupted by a startling action on the stage before him.

The lovers were surprised at their *tête-à-tête* by the arrival of the enraged count palatine and his men-at-arms!

A terrific scene ensues.

The countess, swooning, is carried off the stage by her hastily summoned women.

The page, surrounded by naked steel blades, stands at bay and defends himself like a young hero. How splendidly he fenced! His keen blade, flashing here, there, up, down, before, behind, everywhere, with the

swiftness of lightning, as he whirled around, parrying mortal thrusts. But he shows signs of failing, and the voice of the count palatine is heard:

"Do not slay him. Take him alive and bring forth the young wild horse that was caught but yesterday. Bind him naked on that wild beast's back and lash them off into the desert!"

The young Achilles, captured and bound, is brought to the front and the curtain drops.

"Splendid fellow!" exclaimed Evans, as thunders of applause rent the air, and cries of—

"Mazeppa! Mazeppa!" or—

"Ancillon! Ancillon! Ancillon!" became so frequent and exciting that at last the great artist stepped in front of the curtain, made a most graceful and reverential bow and retired amid reiterated and prolonged acclamations.

"Evans, you must excuse me! I have had enough of this, and I am going home," said Mr. Hereward.

"Going home! Why, are you not well?" inquired the reporter.

"Perfectly well, but I am going. Good-night, Evans," said Hereward, moving to leave the theatre.

"But stay. The last act—"

"I know the end of the story. I suppose the drama follows the poem. The young Mazeppa is rescued and adopted by the Cossacks; in time is called to reign over them; finally, at the head of his savage hordes, he invades the dominions of the count palatine, burns the castle, slays its lord, and, for aught we know, carries off the lady."

He walked from the theatre to the hotel, looked into the reading-room for a moment, then walked into the ladies' parlor, to see if by chance Lilith was there, and not finding her, he went up to their own apartment and quietly opened the door.

Lilith, sitting by a shaded lamp on the table, with

a pretty red velvet-lined work-box open before her, and a little piece of black gauze needle-work in her hands, looked too serenely happy to be the victim of misplaced or sinful affections.

She raised her head as Hereward entered the room, and her happy face became radiant with surprise and delight.

In the bright atmosphere of her smiling, radiant welcome the dark cloud of doubt and suspicion seemed to pass away from his mind—at least for the time.

"Oh! I am so glad to see you back, Tudor! But I hope you did not return before the performance was over, just to keep me company."

"I did not care to sit out the play," he answered. "You know I really do not care for such entertainments," he added as he dropped into his seat.

He did not intend to mention the name of Ancillon to her if he could avoid doing so; but she herself was the first to allude to the actor.

"You did not find the artist come up to the expectations raised by the advertisements, I suppose," she said, as she calmly resumed her seat and her work—for the "ice" once having been broken, Lilith could now speak of Alfred Ancillon without betraying emotion.

"On the contrary, I found him very superior to anything I had been led to anticipate," replied Tudor.

"Indeed!" she exclaimed, in a tone of frank pleasure.

"Yes; for, in the first place, the theatre in which he acts and the florid style of the hand-bills and posters had led me to expect nothing better than a jumble of ranter, singer and acrobat, all in the person of the lauded artist Ancillon. And I found a most accomplished young tragedian. And in the second place, Lilith—will you look at me for a moment?"

She raised her eyes from her work, and fixed them on his face inquiringly.

"In the second place, Lilith, I was led to expect an old, sallow, vulgar, made-up actor. And I found a young, handsome and accomplished man—a gentleman, as far as personal appearance and manners go to make one."

"Oh, yes, I do think he is all that you say, except in the matter of age. He is not young, but neither is he old nor vulgar. Who ever could have told you that he was so?" she inquired, in such evident surprise that Hereward was, to use a vernacular phrase, "taken aback."

" 'Who?' Why, you yourself, Lilith."

"I?" she exclaimed, in innocent wonder.

"Yes, you. You told me to-night, before I went to the theatre, when I asked you about his age, looks, and so on."

"Oh, no! Indeed, you are mistaken. You must have widely misunderstood me. I do not remember my precise words, but they must have been ill chosen, indeed, to have been capable of being interpreted as you have understood them," said Lilith, so warmly and sincerely that Hereward was greatly perplexed.

"Give me your idea of the man from your point of view," he said.

"Then I think that he is about thirty-eight years old, or what we would call middle-aged; he has a very dark but clear complexion, and very fine dark eyes and hair; and his manners are odd, or what you might call eccentric, but never, never ungentlemanly. He is, indeed, much more cultivated and refined than any of the men of our neighborhood."

"You say that he is thirty-eight years old. Do you call that middle-aged, Lilith?" ?

"I should think so. And a little more than middle-age. I call thirty-five middle-age, because it is just

half of seventy, which, according to the Psalmist, is the natural length of man's life," said the girl of seventeen, confidently.

"Humph! He does not look near the age of thirty-eight," said Tudor.

"No, indeed, he does not. His very slight stature, his boyish countenance, curling black hair, and, in fact, his whole personal appearance, suggests a young man not more than twenty," said Lilith with a smile.

"How do you know his age, Lilith?"

"My impression is that he himself told me, though I am not certain that he did."

"How did you entertain so strange a guest?"

"Oh, I gave him the freedom of our little library, where he wrote, and no doubt dozed a little, and yawned a great deal."

"And you gave him none of your society?"

"Oh, yes, quite a good deal of it."

"Oh! And how did he entertain you on such occasions?"

"Sometimes he read to me."

"What did he read?"

"Fine passages from Shakespeare, Milton, Thompson's Seasons, Cowper's Task, Goldsmith's Deserted Village, and those charming old dried balsam poets that our dear father taught me to love so much. Tudor, would you like to have me lay aside my sewing and help you to answer those letters? There is a great pile of them come this evening," she inquired, half rising from her seat to close her work-box.

"No, no, I am not in the mood to-night. I think I will go down into the smoking-room and take a cigar."

"A very little amusement seems to unfit you for work, Tudor," she said with a smile.

"This evening's amusement has, at any rate," he replied, as he left the room.

"I feel so relieved now that I am able to speak of

him without betraying any emotion that might endanger my secret, or indeed without feeling any painful emotion. But there is little to fear now. This is his last night. To-morrow he leaves Washington, *en route* for California, and will trouble my life and imperil his own no more, as I hope and believe," said Lilith, as she gathered up her sewing and put it away, and began to prepare a pot of cocoa over her gas-lamp.

Meanwhile Hereward had gone downstairs, lighted his cigar in the smoking-room, and strolled out into the avenue to walk up and down the sidewalk to smoke and to cool his heated brain.

His interview with Lilith had shaken his doubts of her, but had perplexed him beyond measure.

He could not sit in Lilith's company, look in her face, and retain his suspicions.

But when he came away from her and lost sight of her, his doubts returned to bewilder his reason.

A half-hour later he returned to his room, partook of the cup of cocoa that Lilith smilingly offered him, because she said it was a better "night-cap" than tea, and soon after retired for the night.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SHADOW DARKENS

Mr. Alfred Ancillon had left Washington for San Francisco, and a new prodigy reigned at the Varieties in his stead.

Lilith felt very much relieved by his departure, and she went with new zest to the work that made her life's happiness, the work of helping her husband and materially lightening his labors.

But, as the days went on, she began to realize and lament a change that was coming over Tudor. He was not unkind exactly; but he was graver, silenter and more reserved than she had ever known him to be. He never jested with her now, never called her pet names, or interested himself in her pursuits.

One day when he seemed even more than usually grave and silent, she ventured to ask him:

"Tudor, dear, are you not feeling well?"

"Yes," he answered, lifting his eyes, with a surprised and almost displeased expression.

"Tudor, are there—have you any business anxieties or troubles in which I could be of any use to you?" she next inquired.

"No, no, Lilith, thank you, none," he replied, with more courtesy than kindness in his look and tone, as he returned to the perusal of his correspondence.

Lilith suppressed a rising sigh as she resumed her work of answering the letters he had marked for her.

Tudor Hereward was indeed just then a most unhappy man. He was just in that state of doubt and uncertainty in which he could do nothing to relieve his mind.

"She seems to love me," he said to himself; "she seems to be devoted to my interests. She waits on me as if she were my daughter instead of my wife. She surely does! But what does all that go to prove? Nothing, or worse than nothing! It may be that she—knowing that her heart is unfaithful to me—only tries to atone by her actions for her want of love! And, by my life! now that I come to think of it, have not I myself, in the first days of our marriage, caressed her all the more tenderly and compassionately because I felt and knew there was no love in my heart for the child who had been forced on me as a wife? And now she is doing the same thing, or nearly the same thing, with less excuse! She is serving me like a

servant to atone for her heart's unfaithfulness! I want no such services, Lilith, my lady! I do not think that I can bring myself to accept them much longer!"

So Tudor Hereward tortured himself. And though sometimes in Lilith's presence the fires of jealousy burned down, they never burned out, but smouldered on continually, ready to break out at any instant.

And Lilith, feeling the change that she could not prevent nor understand, began to lose her bright spirits and buoyant health, and to grow pensive and silent.

All the people in the house noticed this decline and commented on it to each other.

He was never actually unkind to Lilith, but he was always cool, and often capricious in his manner to her, in correspondence with the ebb and flow of his moods of suspicion.

Lilith, deeply perplexed and distressed by this change in Tudor, suffered all the more intensely, because she could not comprehend it, and could not do anything to remedy the evil. She could not even question him, because she saw that questions annoyed him, without eliciting any satisfactory answer.

It may seem strange that a man of Tudor Hereward's exalted intellect should permit himself and his conduct to be governed by his moods. But all who have had experience in human nature know well that the men who command armies, or lead Senates, cannot always govern their own spirits.

Lilith's health and strength continued to fail so visibly that Hereward, despite all his cruel suspicions of her faithfulness, began to be seriously uneasy.

Suppose he had been unjust to her all this time? Suppose he had cruelly wronged her? Suppose she should be taken from him? he said to himself, as he watched her one evening, while she was seated at the

table, engaged in answering the letters that he marked and handed to her from time to time, while looking through his correspondence.

In this better mood he spoke to her very gently:

"Lilith, you are not looking well; I think you should have medical advice."

"I am not ill, Tudor," she replied, looking up from her work with a smile.

"No, but you are white, thin and depressed; I often see it; you stay too much in the house; you have too little recreation, Lilith; we must go out more."

"I really do not care to go out, Tudor! And we have a great deal to occupy us at home."

"You do not care to go out! That is the worst of signs. That is the way people feel when they stay indoors until they grow morbid. We must reform this habit at once. To-morrow evening there will be a public reception at the White House. We will attend it. Put aside those letters, Lilith, and turn your thoughts to your toilet, for it must be one of simple elegance to suit the style of your very youthful beauty," he said, more affectionately than he had spoken to her for many days.

She was so deeply moved by his tender tone that she would have thrown herself into his arms and wept on his bosom; but she restrained herself, and with only a gentle smile she handed him the letter she had just finished, and said:

"This is the last, Tudor, unless you have marked some more for me."

"No, no more to-night, Lilith," he said, as he took the letter and noticed the bright light in her eyes and the fire in her cheeks, which only his tender words had called there, although they looked so much like fever—the fatal hectic fever that he remembered so well in his own young mother's case.

"Lilith," he inquired, with more anxiety than dis-

cretion, as she resumed her seat, "is there consumption in your family, do you know?"

She looked up in surprise and perplexity as if in doubt, before she replied:

"I—I really don't know, Tudor. I have had no means of knowing, you remember."

Yes, he did remember what his own dying father had told him of the death of Lilith's parents: the father drowned in saving his—Tudor's—life; the mother killed by the shock. The child Lilith orphaned on the day of her birth. He remembered the whole tragic and pathetic story, and the remembrance deepened his pity for Lilith.

"Why did you ask me if there was consumption in my family, Tudor, dear? Did you fear it—for me? You need not do so. I never had a cough in all my life, and there is really nothing the matter with my health—nothing," she said, emphatically.

"I am glad to hear you say so, dear. And I do believe that there is nothing really amiss with you but want of rest and of recreation; and these you shall surely have."

The next day, following out his resolution, Hereward reminded Lilith that they were to go to the President's reception in the evening.

She replied that she remembered it and would be ready.

When he had left the hotel for the Capitol, Lilith did think of her toilet for the occasion, feeling more anxious to please Tudor by her appearance than to win the admiration of the fashionable world at the reception.

She had a very narrow field of choice for her dress—black or white, or both mixed.

She laid out her best black dress—a lustreless silk trimmed with crape. That would not do at all for the

occasion; it was much too sombre—too heavy; Tudor would not like it.

For a moment she was perplexity embodied. It was her very best dress. She had no other, except two very plain house dresses of black cashmere.

Suddenly her face brightened. She thought of her wedding dress, and remembered that very young people in mourning might wear white in the evening, if they avoided colors and trimmed the white with black.

When evening came and she was dressed for the reception, Tudor involuntarily looked the admiration that he did not otherwise express.

He gave her his arm, and took her down to the ladies' parlor to wait for the carriage that he went to order.

There were very few ladies in the parlor. They were mostly in their chambers, dressing for the reception.

Lilith, however, saw a Mrs. Praed, an elderly lady, who always spoke affectionately to the lonely young creature, and she went and seated herself beside this fellow-boarder.

"How lovely you look, my dear! How beautiful your dress is! The combination is really elegant," said Mrs. Praed, approvingly.

"It was my wedding dress," said Lilith, simply. "I took off the white flowers, and replaced them with these black crêpe lisse bows."

"Heavens, my dear! You surely never did THAT!" exclaimed Mrs. Praed.

"Yes, why not?" inquired Lilith, in surprise.

"Oh, my dear child!" exclaimed the old lady, who had more heart than brains, "for heaven's sake, go and take off all that black at once! Though I don't know that that would break the spell. The mischief is done! You have worn it; it is too late, I fear. Oh, child!"

"What mischief is done, Mrs. Praed?"

"Dear, dear! You have actually put mourning trimming on the dress you were married in!"

"Well, but I am in mourning for my dear father."

"That makes no difference in what you have done. Oh! my dear, it is the worst luck in this world! It is an awful sign of approaching misfortune! Do run and take all that black off immediately."

Lilith half despised herself for the thrill of superstitious dread that suddenly shook her frame.

In a few moments they were in the carriage, bowling up the avenue to the White House.

So large was the reception that evening, and so long was the line of carriages, reaching from far down the street before the gates, and far up the avenue of approach to the house, that the Herewards, who drew up at the foot of the line, had to wait ten minutes and creep by inches before they passed through the gate.

It was a very severe ordeal. They were crushed through the halls, crushed through their respective dressing-rooms, and when by magic they met again, they were crushed into the reception-room and into the presence of the President and his party.

A gentleman in an elegant court dress was just making his bow to the chief magistrate.

"He is very handsome! Who is he?" whispered a lady to her companion, both standing directly in front of the Herewards.

"Oh, he is Señor Don Alphonzo Mendoza Leon-y-Zuniga, the nephew of the P—— minister," whispered her escort.

At the same moment the bowing courtier raised his head and turned to leave the "presence," and in that moment, to their amazement, the Herewards recognized in the elegant young Spaniard the form and face of the strolling player, Mr. Alfred Ancillon.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WRONGED LOVE

LILITH grew pale and faint, and spasmodically clasped the arm of her husband. He looked intently on the face of the foreigner.

For an instant, against all probability, both the husband and the wife took the stranger to be no other than Mr. Alfred Ancillon.

Hereward turned and looked sternly into the face of Lilith. He noticed her deep disturbance, her pallor and her faintness, and he ground his teeth with inward rage as he muttered to himself:

"Even a stranger's accidental likeness to the man she—yes, by my life! the man she loves—can throw her into this deep emotion. Heaven and earth! why did I ever marry this child?"

He had no more time for jealous self-torture. The foreigner had passed out; the people behind pushed them; and the marshal was about to present him—

"Mr. President—Mr. Hereward."

Tudor Hereward bowed profoundly, and then presented his wife in due form.

The President received them, as he received all comers, very cordially, shaking hands with Hereward, addressing a few words of courtesy to Lilith and then presenting them to the ladies of the White House who were with him. Graceful bows on both sides, and the short ceremony was over.

Still pressed on by the throng of people behind, they passed into the East Room, where, indeed, as Tudor had predicted, they had more space.

A very fine band, stationed somewhere out of sight, was playing the grand spirit-stirring Kaiser March of

Wagner, and the greater portion of the company were promenading in a circle around the room.

All the company were not promenading, however. Many were seated on the sofas and chairs ranged against the walls, and many were standing in groups, talking fashion, politics, society or gossip.

No one seemed to listen to the grand music.

Hereward, still grim as the Sphinx with the thought of Lilith's agitation at the sight of the foreigner, led his young wife to a seat on an unoccupied sofa, in the northeast corner of the room.

They were almost immediately surrounded.

Political friends of Hereward came up to congratulate him on the effect of his last great speech, and—perhaps—with the wish to be introduced to his beautiful wife.

Tudor, throwing off the gloom that had settled on his brow, thanked each and all for their words, and presented them in turn to Mrs. Hereward.

A gray-haired senator from the South—a fine, courtly old gentleman, of stately and gracious manner, and with the pure and knightly devotion to women that savored of the mediæval age—on being presented to Hereward's lovely young wife, invited her to join in the promenade, and with a smile, she arose and took his arm, for she had been pleased and attracted by the polished grace and elegance of this gentleman of the old school.

They joined the promenaders. He talked no small talk to Lilith. Looking down on her intellectual and spiritual face, he spoke of her husband—of his genius, his statecraft, his eloquence, his patriotism, the great promise of his future—a future blended with the future of his country.

And Lilith, leaning on his arm, hanging on his words, lifting her lovely face to his, her starry eyes

full of the reverential admiration that excellent youth must feel for honored age, listened in rapt delight to his praises of Hereward.

They thus formed the most perfectly beautiful picture of youth and age.

Hereward scarcely gave any attention to the speech of the men that were around him, often answering their questions at random. He was watching Senator —— and Lilith as they slowly passed and repassed before him.

"Ah!" said Hereward to himself. "I fear she is a natural coquette, withal! Just to see how she basks in that Chesterfield's admiration and flatteries! Oh! why did I ever suffer myself to be persuaded, even by my dying father, to marry a child I never loved—never can love—and of whose parentage and hereditary traits and taints I knew nothing? What shall I do with her? Well, at any rate, I cannot let that gay old Lothario pour any more of his soft nonsense into her vain and credulous ears."

And with this resolve Hereward arose, saw a lady of his acquaintance sitting alone, went up to her, bowed, and invited her to join the promenade.

She arose, placed her hand in his arm, and permitted him to lead her away.

But they did not immediately join the promenaders, for Hereward waited until there was such an opening in the procession as to allow him to glide in with his companion just behind Senator —— and Lilith. Hereward did not talk to his companion; he listened to the talk of the two who were before him; and this is what he heard for his pains. The senator was speaking, and Tudor caught just a fragment of his discourse:

"An illustrious career, my dear young lady."

"It makes me so happy to hear you say this, senator," replied Lilith, beaming up to the speaker's face.

"I have really more faith in Mr. Hereward—in his

moral strength, intellectual power, pure patriotism, and, above all, in his incorruptibility, either by ambition or avarice—than I have in any other of the new men—though I have much faith in many of them," continued the aged diplomat.

"His speech, delivered a few weeks ago on the new tariff, was a masterpiece. The passage of the bill was largely due to his strong arguments and his eloquence in advancing them. You heard that speech?"

"Yes, senator."

"And you thought, no doubt, with us all, that it was a masterpiece?"

"Yes; but I should not be sincere if I should leave you to suppose that I assented to all the arguments advanced by Mr. Hereward in favor of that new tariff," said Lilith.

"Ah!" said the diplomat, taken a little by surprise. "You are, then, rather an advocate for free trade than for a protective tariff."

"I hardly understand all the bearings of the question. I only wish to be truthful, not presumptuous," said Lilith.

"But, my dear young lady, you have an opinion and a very decided one, as I can easily perceive. Will you not give me 'a reason for the faith that is in you?' " inquired the senator, looking gravely and respectfully down on the little, lovely face.

"I do not know that I can give you a reason, sir—but it seems to me that we of this country are so rich and prosperous and safe a people, that we rest on a past of such solid foundation, and on a future of such assured prosperity and progress in all good things, that we can afford to be generous, as it is our bounden duty to be, to all the people of the world's less favored nations. It seems to me that we should open our markets freely to the industries of all the people of all nations on the earth, without restriction and

without fear. To me it seems that this highly-favored country of ours is, indeed, the material New Jerusalem, given, not to us alone, but to all the people of the earth. But pardon me, senator, these are only the impressions of an inexperienced country girl."

Was the venerable diplomat drawing Lilith out? Amusing himself with her naïve and artless thoughts? Hereward inquired of himself, as he listened to the continued talk—the senator evidently suggesting and inspiring, and Lilith freer, more earnest and enthusiastic than Hereward had ever known her to be. From the discussion of the new tariff they drifted to that of the extension of the extradition treaties, which was now the subject of debate in many political and diplomatic circles.

And the old statesman smiled when his earnest young companion said:

"It seems too savage, too barbarous, too unchristianlike to hunt a fellow-creature all over the earth to haul him back to prison or to death. Now if a criminal flies the land he has injured by his crime—let him go. In the middle ages the church was the sanctuary—he who fled to the altar, ay, though he were the blackest of criminals, without a friend in all the world, and with all the powers and principalities of the earth against him, yet he was safe in the shelter of the church. So justice in the darkest age was tempered with mercy."

"Yes, my dear young lady, because it was in the darkest age. But we believe that a criminal should never be allowed to escape justice; but that the whole world should be in league to hunt him down and give him up to suffer the penalties of his crime; and this is an enlightened age."

"Is this an enlightened age, senator? Are we really a civilized people?" wistfully inquired Lilith.

"My dear young lady!" said the diplomat, in surprise. Are we not so?"

"Sometimes I think that we are not. Sometimes I fancy that the people of the future—the people of, let us say, A. D. 2000—may look back upon this nineteenth century as a very dark age indeed! a very picturesque and romantic period, with very dark shadows and very tragic scenes in its history, and that children will read with wonder and curiosity how in this dark nineteenth century, nations had still to keep standing armies and navies for protection against each other, and how towns and cities had to support constabulary forces to keep peace and order between friends and neighbors. It seems to me that while we are making such amazing progress in arts and sciences and in all the appliances of comfort, convenience, luxury and elegance, we are growing more and more selfish and self-absorbed, more thoroughly armed for attack and defence. And individual selfishness seems to have congregated and consolidated into national selfishness. Witness those two bills over which the House has been quarreling for the last month."

"What does my friend Hereward say to these opinions of yours, my dear young lady?"

"He—" said Lilith, while a bright blush and a bright smile lighted up her lovely face—"he says that I am a child—an ignorant and inexperienced child, whose opinions are based on feeling and not on reason; and this may be true. But, senator," she said, looking deferentially up into his fine old face, "you are very indulgent to let me talk so freely of subjects on which I have had no experience and can have but little knowledge."

"I have listened to you with interest and pleasure, my dear young lady," said the old gentleman, as he gently caressed the little white-gloved hand that lay upon his sleeve.

Hereward, hearing all this talk, heard no word of the "soft nonsense" he had predicted—no word of flattery or of compliment from the old statesman to the young lady. When, therefore, Lilith's face had lighted up with pleasure, it was not at praises addressed to herself, but of him, her husband! And all the subsequent talk had been of political subjects only.

"I must not fatigue you," said the old senator to his young partner, as he left the line and led her back to her husband, bowed with stately courtesy and walked away.

Lilith was glad to be beside Hereward again. She took her seat with a smile and looked in his face. But his dark mood had not passed away. Certainly he had not convicted his young wife of "flirting" with the old senator.

The two happened to be seated alone on a short corner sofa, and no one was very near them at the moment. So Lilith said to him:

"You should have heard how highly Senator —— spoke of your last speech, Tudor. And his opinion must be worth more than that of any other man in Congress, I should judge."

"You are not capable of judging, Lilith, and you should not venture to speak of matters beyond your comprehension. I did hear what the senator was good enough to say of my efforts and of other matters; and I also heard your immature opinions upon questions that have confounded the wisest philosophers. You should not presume to give opinions upon matters so far beyond your comprehension," Hereward coldly replied.

Lilith blushed crimson over face and neck; but recovered herself, and gently replied:

"I am very sorry, Tudor, but I must have been either insincere or rude not to have done so; especially

when the senator was so kind as to inquire my sentiments."

" 'Sentiments!' There you have used the right word, my dear. Your young 'opinions' are no more than sentiments. And the world is not governed by sentiment."

Lilith had very little self-love to be wounded, else surely she must have been deeply humiliated by this contemptuous criticism. Yet she felt hurt.

Lilith could not know that Tudor Hereward's thoughts and feelings towards her were all affected by his want of love for her and trust in her.

Lilith was innocent of this knowledge. Tudor was her mentor, and his criticism had—not wounded the self-esteem that she did not possess—but filled her with a paralyzing self doubt.

Silence had fallen between the pair, when a small group of acquaintances drifted towards them. In this group was Judge Stretton, who was talking earnestly with that young foreigner—nephew of the P—— minister—who bore so startling a likeness to Mr. Alfred Ancillon, the universal stage genius.

Judge Stretton stopped and gayly saluted Mr. and Mrs. Hereward, with both of whom he was well acquainted, and then he begged permission to present his friend, Señor Don Alphonzo Mendoza-Leon-y-Zuniga, of P——.

The stranger made a profound bow, which was stiffly returned by Mr. Hereward, who was covertly watching to see how Lilith would receive the Señor, who, on being presented to the young beauty, made even a more profound obeisance, which Lilith returned with a smile and a graceful inclination of her head, while her color came and went, and a slight tremor shook her frame.

Nothing of all this escaped the eyes of Tudor Hereward, not even the almost imperceptible start with

which the stranger first met her eyes—and which looked to those jaundiced orbs like a surprised recognition.

Yet it could not be possible these two had ever met before, he thought.

Was it quite impossible that the elegant youth, whom he had seen in the character of Mazeppa and under the name of Alfred Ancillon, should be in fact the young Señor Don Alphonzo Mendoza-Leon-y-Zuniga, nephew to the P—— minister? Had he not really gone to California, as had been announced, but had he returned like the Prodigal Son to his father, or, for want of a father, to his uncle?

It might be so. This supposititious case was not without parallels in life.

Did Lilith know of all this?

The gossip at Frosthill had said that she had met this Mr. Alfred Ancillon somewhere in the North while making a summer tour with her foster-father—though how they could have known that fact, if it was a fact, seemed a mystery.

But had she ever met him before? And, if so, had she met him under any other name than that of Ancillon—if he had any other?

And Hereward drew his own conclusions.

But only for a few moments did the knight thus bow before the lady.

With a profound obeisance to both Mr. and Mrs. Hereward he soon glided away.

The reception was at its height. But still the East Room was not crowded. Although a stream of new arrivals entered at one door, another stream of early departures went out through another.

"Have you had enough of this, Lilith?" inquired Mr. Hereward, somewhat coldly.

"Yes, Tudor," replied the young wife, wearily, as she arose and took his offered arm.

He led her down the steps and placed her in her seat, entered and sat down by her side. The carriage immediately rolled off.

Since leaving the East Room, Hereward had not spoken one word to his young wife.

She felt the silence oppressive, and, child-like, broke at a venture:

"Have you enjoyed the evening, Tudor?" she inquired.

"Not this evening very particularly," he answered, in a voice so cold as to chill her into silence that lasted all through the ride and all through the evening as well.

It was half-past twelve when they reached their hotel.

Tudor had not spoken again and Lilith dared not do so. Thus for the first time in their short married life, the newly married pair retired without even bidding good-night to each other.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE STORM GATHERS

Dark lowers the tempest overhead.
—Longfellow.

The next day, and for many days after the eventful evening of the President's reception, Tudor Hereward scarcely spoke to his young wife, except to ask some necessary question or to give some order, and then he addressed her in the fewest words and in the coldest tones.

Lilith, depressed and intimidated by his forbidding

manner, never ventured to utter a word except in reply to him.

He no longer permitted her to assist him in his correspondence or any other business, and, in truth, he no longer needed her services as he had done; for his work was not now nearly so pressing as it had been in the early weeks of the session.

One morning, when he was about to leave their room and go to the Capitol for the whole day, she took heart of grace and stood before him, looked up in his face with her honest, loving, dark eyes, and put the direct question:

"Tudor, have I offended you in any way? Are you angry with me?"

He looked down on her with cold, steel-gray eyes and answered:

"Angry with you? Angry with a midge? You do yourself too much honor," and he turned away contemptuously and left her standing there, wounded to the very soul.

Women so wronged, so insulted, so outraged by those they love, and having no others in the world to soothe, comfort or advise them, have been driven to desperate deeds—deeds of madness.

Lilith felt the temptation in all its terrible strength; but she did not for one moment dream of yielding to it. Lilith, young as she was, scarcely past childhood, had already learned the difficult lesson of self-control.

She stood quite still for a few minutes, then locked her chamber and went and kneeled down beside her bed, and with meek, child-like faith, sought help and guidance where prayer was never yet offered in vain.

She arose calmed and strengthened. She felt that she must not sit still in her room all day and brood. She must go out and do something—do some good

thing, relieve some distress, help some one who needed help.

She put on her sealskin jacket and hat, took her little satchel and went out.

She had a very definite plan in her mind. She walked to the Rectory of Trinity Church, the church in which she attended divine service, and sent in her card to the rector.

She was immediately shown into the study and cordially received.

"How can I be so happy as to serve you, my dear lady?" kindly inquired Dr. ——.

"By directing me in some work that I wish to set about, if you please, doctor."

"Ah—ah!" murmured the rector, a little doubtfully.

"It is not much that I require of you, sir," said Lilith, "only this: I have some means and a vast deal of leisure time at my disposal, that I do not know what to do with. I think it is wrong that both should be wasted. I only wish you to give me a list of such worthy objects of charity as you may know, that I may have the pleasure of relieving them."

"Oh, Mrs. Hereward, I beg your pardon. It is not many young persons living at a fashionable hotel in this gay capital who would choose to devote their spare time and means to works of charity. Certainly I will give you all the help in your good work that I can. Shall I give you one or two cases for to-day?"

"If you please, doctor."

The list was made out and handed over, and Lilith, with thanks, took leave.

All that day she spent in going from hovel to tenement, and from tenement to hovel, witnessing such scenes of misery as she had never even dreamed of in her happy country home; and forgetting all her own troubles, she experienced something like the happiness of angels in ministering to the poor, relieving

the distressed and changing tears and murmurs into smiles and thanksgivings.

"What has the gay world to give me in exchange for the happiness I have had to-day, in making others happy?" she said, as at last she turned her steps towards her hotel.

It had come on to rain, in one of those sudden showers so frequent in the early spring of our climate.

Lilith had brought no umbrella or waterproof, so she was scudding along the avenue, as fast as she could go, to get in before the rain, which was only drizzling now, should come down in a flood; when a step came to her side, an umbrella over her head, and a voice in her ear, saying:

"Permit me, señora." Lilith slackened her speed, and—still happy in the happiness she had given——beamed on the young foreigner, thanked him for the shelter of his umbrella and without hesitation accepted the support of his arm.

They walked on towards the hotel, and had just reached it, when Tudor Hereward stepped down from the piazza, hoisted his own umbrella and met his wife.

The young foreigner bowed and smiled as he yielded up his charge to her rightful owner.

Mr. Hereward coldly thanked him for his courtesy and led Lilith up to their own apartment.

As soon as they had reached it and he had shut the door, he turned upon her with a brow as black as a thunder cloud and demanded:

"Where have you been? How came that man in your company?"

Lilith dropped into her chair, all the bright glow dying out of her face and leaving it pale as death.

"I ask you where you have been, and how that man came to be with you?" he demanded, more sharply, because she had hesitated to answer.

"I have been to see—some poor people—who were recommended to me by Dr. ——. I was caught in the rain coming home, and Señor Alphonzo saw me, I suppose, for he came up from behind and put his umbrella over my head, and was very kind and courteous. This was only about five minutes before we reached the hotel, Tudor," she said, in a cowering tone.

"Ah!" he said, with scornful incredulity.

"Tudor! I hope you do not doubt my word. I am sure no one ever doubted me before. But if you do, you can easily satisfy yourself. You can ask Dr. —— about the people he sent me to see to-day; and you can follow in my footsteps and ascertain for yourself whether I really went to see them or not."

"Can you really believe that I could go through the city asking questions about my wife?" he bitterly demanded.

"No, no; of course not. I did not mean that; but you could find out without putting a question," she pleaded.

After this it pleased Tudor Hereward that his lovely young wife should go more into society than she had been accustomed to do, and to please him she accepted every invitation to parties, save those of which dancing formed part of the evening's entertainment. These she declined on the ground of being in deep mourning.

And everywhere she was particularly sought out by Señor Alphonzo, who always gave her as much of his society and attentions as circumstances permitted him to do.

And still Tudor Hereward was haunted by a suspicion that Señor Alphonzo and Monsieur Alfred Ancillon were one and the same person, and nothing but his respect for the convenances of good society prevented him from putting an abrupt stop to all acquaintance between Lilith and the señor.

One day he put an abrupt question to her, and watched her face as she replied to it.

"Lilith, had you ever met Señor Alphonzo before he was presented to us at the President's reception?"

"Never," replied the young wife. "Why do you ask?"

" 'For the satisfaction of my thought,' " he quoted; and no more was said.

Still he could not banish his suspicion that Señor Alphonzo and Monsieur Ancillon were identical, and that Lilith knew it, until one day, on picking up one of the morning papers, under the heading of MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC, he read the following note:

"Monsieur Alfred Ancillon, whose rendition of Mazeppa in this city some weeks since, will be remembered by our play-going community as one of the finest pieces of the dramatic art ever witnessed, is now winning fresh laurels and—in more than one sense of the word—'golden opinions' from all sorts of people in the Golden State. Mr. Ancillon expects to sail early next month for Australia, where he proposes to spend a year."

"Ah, then, after all, startling as is the likeness, there is no longer any question that they are two men," said Tudor Hereward, following out his thought.

"However, I am glad the fellow is going to the antipodes, and I heartily wish that he may stay there," he continued, mentally.

But still his jealousy of the señor did not abate.

"Why does Lilith tolerate the monkey?" he asked himself. "Is it for his likeness to Ancillon, or is it for himself alone? Has he supplanted monsieur and succeeded him in my lady's fickle fancy? I will find out."

One day he broached the subject to his young wife.

"Lilith," he said, "I think you told me that you had never met Señor Don Alphonzo Mendoza-Leon-y-Zuniga until he was introduced to us on the occasion of our first visit to the White House?"

"Yes, Tudor, I told you so," replied Lilith, wondering.

"And you never had seen him before?"

"Certainly not, since I told you so, Tudor," she replied, with a certain gentle dignity.

"Then why, may I ask you, Lilith, did you feel and betray so much emotion at the sight of this man, whom you persist in saying that you had never met before?" he demanded, fixing his eyes on her troubled face—for she was always troubled now whenever Hereward spoke of the young foreigner.

"Did I? Did I, Tudor?" she inquired, in distress.

"You did. And I ask you now—what I have a right to ask—why you betrayed so much emotion at the sight of this man, whom you say you never saw before?"

"Oh," said the young wife, beginning to tremble and turn pale, "I think it was because—because—"

"Of his likeness to Monsieur Ancillon?" sternly demanded Hereward.

"Yes," said Lilith, in an almost expiring voice.

"That is enough," he said.

CHAPTER XXX

TUDOR HEREWARD'S RESOLVE

"It is enough," repeated Tudor Hereward; and no words can express the grimness of his look or the intensity of his suppressed rage, as he took his hat and left the room.

"What have I done? Oh, what have I done to lose my husband's esteem and affection?" said Lilith to herself, as she sank back in her chair and covered her face with her hands. "I have tried my best to deserve both. It was my heart's dearest wish to be of service to him, my soul's ambition to become necessary, and even, if possible, indispensable to him. And now, now! He is so changed! so changed! He is angry with me—suspicious of me. He will not let me help him any longer. Nothing that I do or leave undone seems right in his sight. Oh! if I had any good and wise friend with whom to take counsel! What can have caused this change? It is not the secret—the secret which is not mine to tell, but which I must continue to keep from him—oh! how unwillingly! No, it is not the secret, for he does not even suspect that I have one. Let me see! Let me look back! When did this frost that has blighted our peace set in? It was on the evening of his visit to the Varieties, to see Monsieur Ancillon in his great character of Mazeppa. He came home and questioned me closely about Monsieur Ancillon, his storm-bound stay at the Cliffs, his age, his looks, our occupations and amusements, and—from that evening began the change! And now—good heavens!" exclaimed the young wife, as the truth suddenly broke on her—broke over her and suffused face, neck and bosom with burning blushes for the perception that she would not even put in words—scarcely in thought—that her husband was jealous of Alfred Ancillon!

Never in her life before could Lilith, in her high, serene purity of soul, have imagined such a depth of humiliation as she suffered now.

"Oh!" she murmured, pressing her hands together, in the intense distress she felt; "oh, that my dear foster-father, Tudor's father, were but living! He would never dream of such an impossibility as any doubt of

his child's love and faith of heart and life! But, then, he knew me so well that he could never be mistaken in me."

While Lilith was grieving over her husband's infatuation, he, Tudor Hereward, had walked rapidly down the avenue to the Capitol Park, which was at this hour deserted except by the night watch.

Turning into one of the walks where he felt reasonably sure of being alone, he sauntered on, ruminating over the misfortune that had made him the husband of Lilith Wyvil.

"Better—far better that I had been left to drown, that then and there I should have perished, rather than that my life should have been saved at such a cost! The cost of two lives laid down for mine, and the greater cost of my own life-long penalty in paying that sacred debt! What did I know of this girl whom I married? Nothing, or next to nothing!

"Not that I believe for an instant that Lilith, in all her weakness and folly, could wrong me in the gravest sense of that word! But she has, through her fancy, vanity and imagination, allowed her affections to stray towards this young player!—living out her hereditary plebeian instincts! Why, she cannot even meet a man in society who may happen to look like this Ancillon—curse him—without betraying herself!

"But I must prevent that. I must take her down into the country. She will be safe now at the Cliffs. Ancillon is in San Francisco, where he is likely to stay for a while, and then to sail for Australia."

Having come to this conclusion, Tudor Hereward turned to retrace his steps to his hotel.

He hurried to his hotel, and went upstairs to his room.

He found Lilith still seated in the arm-chair where he had left her, but looking paler, wearier and more listless than she had ever been.

"Lilith," he said, throwing himself into another chair, "I wish you to pack a valise with what is necessary for you and myself on the journey. We leave here for West Virginia by the nine o'clock train to-morrow morning."

"We leave here!—to-morrow morning!" exclaimed Lilith, almost breathless with surprise at this sudden announcement.

"Yes," was the curt answer.

"But, can you—can you be spared from your seat, Tudor," she hesitatingly inquired.

"At this juncture, I can."

"And—you said West Virginia! Are you going to Frosthill?—to Cloud Cliffs?"

"Yes; if you have no objection."

"Oh, no, Tudor. I shall be very glad to go. How long shall we stay?"

"I shall stay but one night. You will remain there for the present."

"You—you mean to take me there and leave me, Tudor?" she inquired, with a tremor in her voice.

"Decidedly, yes, I do. I think the air of the city unhealthy for you; the seclusion of the country suits you best."

She arose and went about her little task of packing a valise with what was most necessary for their journey.

"You need not take much. I shall only want a change, and you but little more, for I shall send your trunks after you. All I want now is to take you away from the city as soon as possible," he said, coldly and hardly.

She stood beside the open valise and looked at him with her dark eyes full of trouble.

Then suddenly she went to him, dropped her head on his shoulder, and said:

"Oh, Tudor! do not send me away from you! Oh, Tudor! there is not one pulse in my heart that is not true to you!"

"Rather mortifying that my wife should think it necessary to tell me that she is honest," sneered the angry and jealous husband.

"Tudor! Tudor! how have I been so unfortunate as to have displeased you? Oh! tell me, Tudor! Tell me! Tell me how I have offended you," she pleaded.

He repelled her caress, and answered, coldly:

"I will not. Listen to me, Lilith, and mark what I say: The hour in which I shall find it necessary to accuse you, will be the hour in which we part forever! So pray take heed to yourself, my lady."

She raised her eyes in sorrowful amazement, and then without a word went from his side and resumed her packing.

Nor was another syllable spoken between the estranged pair that night.

Early the next morning they left Washington by the nine o'clock train for West Virginia.

It was a fine day in the early spring, yet there were but few travelers on the train.

The slow hours of the journey passed almost in total silence between the pair.

When at one o'clock the train reached "Morgan's Station," where ten minutes' stop was allowed for refreshments, Hereward spoke for the first time to Lilith.

"Will you come out and have something?"

"No, thank you, Tudor," she replied, in a low, tremulous tone that she could scarcely command.

He did not press the question, but left the train, with other passengers, and went into "Morgan's Refreshment Saloons," which in the old staging days used to be "Morgan's Tavern."

A few minutes later, when all the passengers had

again taken their seats, Hereward drew a fresh packet of tablets from his pocket and began to make notes for some forthcoming debate or speech in the House, of course. And at this work, writing slowly and with many pauses for reflection, he continued until six o'clock, when the shrill warning whistle blew, and the train "slowed" and ran into the Frosthill station.

They had to wait only a few moments. The one carriage from the hotel which was usually on hand to meet the incoming train, now drove up to the station, a few minutes later than ordinarily.

Hereward signaled Lilith to come out of the waiting-room, and when she did so he put her into the carriage, followed and seated himself by her side, and ordered the coachman to drive out to Cloud Cliffs.

The sun had set; the angry red clouds were heaped mountain high on the western horizon; the wind was blowing a gale; the weather had become severely cold.

Hereward, turning to his companion, tucked her fur-lined mantle closely about her, and pulled down the curtains on her side to keep out all the draught.

Lilith, encouraged by this little show of attention, ventured a remark:

"They will be very much surprised to see us at the Cliffs to-night, Tudor."

"I suppose so. It is well to take those who are intrusted with our interests by surprise sometimes. We may be surprised in our turn," he answered, coldly.

"Oh, I do not think so in this case, Tudor. Our servants are so faithful," said Lilith.

He made no reply to this and she was chilled into silence again.

They were entering the long road through the woods, leafless and spectral in the March night.

The drive continued in darkness and silence for more than an hour before they turned into the lodge

gate. In a few minutes they drew up before the house.

It was closed, silent, dark and deserted—at least to all appearance.

The driver jumped down from his box, opened the carriage door and said:

"Marster, I doan see any lights nor likewise anybody about. Hadn' I better go roun' de back an' see ef I can fine any ob de colored people to come open de do' fo' you an' de young mist'ess?"

"Yes, Phipps, do so," replied Hereward, abruptly closing the carriage door to keep out the sharpness of the wind.

The man seemed to have been gone but a few moments when footsteps and lights were heard and seen, in a hurly-burly of excitement, coming through the house, the hall door was thrown open, and Nancy, with all the household servants at her back, ran out to welcome her master and her mistress.

Hereward had lifted Lilith out, and paid and discharged the carriage, which rolled rapidly away.

"Come in, honey. You's mos' frozen. I's mighty proud to see yer bofe. But w'y de name ob sense didn' yer sen' me word yer was comin', so I might hab fires kindle' in all de fireplaces, an' de rooms dried an' aired for yer? Dat's wot I want to know now," said Nancy, as she escorted her young mistress into the cold, damp, musty-smelling hall.

"Mr. Hereward made up his mind quite suddenly to come down. There was no time to write," gently replied Lilith.

"Oh, Lor'! 'Deed it'll kill yer, ef yer stay yere. Better come in de kitchen long ob me, till Alick make up de fires! Marse Tudor, w'y in de name o' sense, didn' yer write or teleg'aph, or somefin, to let us know yer was comin', an' not bring de young mist'ess down so sudden to sich a grabe-yard place as dis ole house is in de winter time 'dout fires?"

Without expecting any reply from the master of the house, she hurried Lilith off to the great square stone kitchen in the rear of the house, where a fine fire of hickory logs was blazing in the broad chimney.

Lilith went up to the welcome warmth and held out her half-frozen hands.

"Cassy," she said to the cook, who was waiting to be noticed; "I want you to get the best supper you can, at the shortest notice. Your master has had nothing but a railway lunch since we left Washington this morning."

"Yes, Miss Lilif. Yes, honey. Now yer jes leabe all dat to my 'sources. I'll fix up all dat."

Lilith was soon made comfortable in her easy-chair, in the corner of the chimney, with a warm mat under her feet.

Mr. Hereward had not followed her into the kitchen. He was somewhere in the house, probably overseeing Alick in his work of kindling fires and airing rooms.

"Now I look at yer good, young mist'ess, I doan fink yer look well at all. Wot's de matter wid yer, honey?" inquired Nancy.

"Nothing is the matter with my health. I was pinched with the cold when I came in," replied Lilith.

To change the subject, Lilith inquired:

"How is Alick? Is he any better than he was?"

"Oh, yes, Alick's come all right. Arter you and Marse Tudor went to de city dat time, Alick come sneakin' home. I was a great min' not to let him come in de kitchen, but me an' him is ole fellow-servants, so I didn' 'fuse him. An' he didn' show no signs ob bein' out'n his head, 'cept by de queer questions he axed."

"Questions?"

"Yes, honey. Impidint questions, I called 'em. He ax how was de marster mad long o' you, w'en he come home; an' how did he 'quire arter him, Alick, an' was

he gwine to shoot anybody. I shet him up mighty quick, I tell yer, young mist'ess; an' since dat Alick has been as good as goole."

At this moment Cely, the little housemaid, came into the kitchen and said:

"Dere's a great, big, fine fire in yer room, Miss Lilif, and eberyfing fix comfo'ble for yer, ef yer likes to go upsta'rs."

"Yes, I will go; I want to get off my heavy wraps and thick boots," said Lilith, rising.

Her own chamber, when she reached it, was very pleasant, comfortable and attractive.

A great fire had been kindled, and then all the windows had been opened to allow the high, dry March wind to blow freely through the room for a few minutes, and then they had been closed. And now the atmosphere was at once fresh and warm.

Warm water and clean towels were on the wash-stand.

Lilith laid off her hat and cloak, washed her face and hands, brushed out and put up her hair, and then sat down before the fire.

"Where is Mr. Hereward, do you know?" she inquired of the little maid.

"Marse Tudor in de parlor, talkin' long ob Alick. Reckon he's axin' Alick how de farm is gettin' on," replied Cely.

Cely was right enough in her facts, but all wrong in her deductions.

Mr. Hereward was in the parlor talking with Alick, certainly, but not of farm affairs.

This was the very first time he had seen Alick since the morning of his arrival, some weeks before, when the negro man astonished him by taking to his heels and running away.

Now he entered the parlor while Alick was engaged in piling dry pine logs on a freshly kindled fire.

"Alick," said his master, so suddenly that the man jumped as if he had been jerked up—"Alick, do you remember a letter you wrote to me last January?"

"Now, Lor' 'a' messy 'pon top o' my po' brack soul, how de sins do fine us out!" said the man, backing himself up against the chimney corner for support.

"Answer me! Do you remember that letter?" sternly demanded Mr. Hereward.

"Now, Lor', Marse Tudor, yer ain't gwine to go rippin' up dat ole 'fence 'g'in me, is yer?" stuttered the delinquent, with chattering teeth.

"I ask you, do you remember that letter?" sharply reiterated Mr. Hereward.

Alick's eyes rolled and his teeth chattered. He scratched his head, and then answered, boldly:

"Letter? Wot letter? No, young marse, I doan 'member nuffin' 'bout no letter. W'ich I was hopes as yer had nebber 'ceived dat letter, or else as yer had forgot all 'bout it. Anyways, I doan know nuffin 'bout no letter."

"The letter you wrote me in last January, you villain! The letter in which you spoke of your mistress' visitor!" sternly exclaimed Mr. Hereward.

"Now, wot letter was dat, ag'in?" said Alick, scratching his head and pretending to ransack his memory with a puzzled air.

"Oh, you doubly deceitful wretch! You know well enough what letter it was. The one which you wrote—"

"Now, dere, young marse; dere. Ef it war de las' word I had to speak in dis worl' I nebber writ no letter. W'y, I nebber writ no letter in all my life. I—I dunno how to write. 'Deed it's de trufe," said Alick, with the most confident look of injured innocence.

"Why, you prevaricating rascal, if you did not write the letter, you dictated it to the postmaster's

boy who wrote it for you," angrily declared Mr. Hereward.

"Now jes' see dat now, how dat little young scamp ob a boy done gone an' gib me away. An' I dunno nuffin 'bout no letter neider. 'Deed, Lor' knows I didn' write dat letter, marse."

"But you dictated it."

"'Deed Lor' knows I nebber dictated it neider! 'Deed it's de trufe."

"If you did not, who did?"

"It was de debbil, sah. 'Deed it was de debbil. 'Deed it's de trufe."

"So," said Hereward, who was too familiar with the negro's belief in the activity of a personal devil to be the least surprised at this explanation. And he dropped into an arm-chair to question the man further.

"So it was the devil that sent you to Frosthill to get that letter written to me?"

"Yes, marse, it was de debbil. Doan yer blame dis po' nigger fo' it, marse. I couldn' help ob it. It was de debbil a-pushin' an' a-pushin an' a-pushin' ob me on to do it all de time."

"What reason did the foul fiend give you for doing such a thing?"

"Yer mean him?" mysteriously inquired the negro.

"Yes."

"Well, marse, he keep a-tellin' ob me as—as—yer ought to be home to look arter de fam'ly, an' see into de—de visitors wot come—"

"Meaning one visitor in particular."

"Ye—ye—yes, marse. But my Lor'-a-mity, marse, doan go an' shoot nobody. Please doan. It's so awful lonesome-like to have people shootin' and hangin' an' fings. 'Sides which, I rarely doan know nuffin 'bout no letter, an' I doan know wot yer talkin' 'bout neider. 'Deed doan I. 'Deed it's de trufe."

"What was there in the conduct of this young man who happened to be storm-bound here that induced you—or the devil—to write that letter?" inquired Hereward, ignoring the negro's relapses into denial.

"Conduck, young marse? Nuffin in de worl'. Oh, doan go gunnin' arter him, young marse. A more nicerer or properer behaved young youf nebber come into no house befo'. W'y, he was jes' like a young min's'er. He 'minded me ob de airly pieties wot allers go to Heben young, in de Sunday-schools books, he was dat sober-minded an' sankyfied."

"If such was the case, why did you write that letter, or cause it to be written?"

"Hi, marse, wot I tell yer? 'Twa'n't me, it was de debbil. He made me do it. I couldn' help myse'f to save my life."

"And why do you suppose the enemy of mankind wished you to do this particular piece of mischief?"

"I t'ought dat myse'f, marse, arterwards. I t'ought —what de name ob sense de debbil make po' me do dat fer? An' I came to de 'clusion as de debbil want me to aggrawate you to go gunnin' arter dat pious young youf! 'Caze he is allers goin' 'bout like a roarin' lion seekin' whom he may 'wour. 'Deed it's de trufe."

"Very well," he said, at length, looking steadily into the half frightened, half obstinate face of the negro. "Very well. I am willing on this occasion that the broad back of the devil should bear the responsibility of that letter. But hark you, sir. If you should ever yield to the instigation of the evil one to write such another letter to me, or to any one else—I—shall make you wish you had never been born."

"Lor', young marse, dat would be nuffin new to me. I done wish dat offen an' offen since de inimy writ dat letter. 'Deed all de colored people 'bout yere could tell yer as I was out ob my lunacies 'bout it, so feared

yer'd go gunnin' arter dat pious young youf wot de debbil had a spite ag'in. I tell yer, young marse—"

"There, that will do. I wish to hear no more about the matter. Only mark my words and remember them," said Hereward, whose patience had been tried to the utmost.

His doubts, suspicions, and jealousies had been so increased by the prevarications of the negro, that he was in a most miserable mood when he finally arose to go upstairs and get some of the railroad dust from his face and hair.

As soon as he left the little parlor, the two housemaids, Cely and Mandy, came in to lay the cloth for supper there, because it was so much cosier than the large dining-room.

Half an hour later, Hereward and Lilith were seated at a dainty yet substantial meal, which they might have enjoyed well had not the cloud between them overshadowed and dampened the spirits of both.

When the meal was about half over, Hereward beckoned Alick, who was waiting on the table, to come to his side. And when the man obeyed, he said:

"Tell the cook that I shall want a cup of coffee at half-past five to-morrow morning. Tell Stephen to have the buggy at the door by a quarter to six. I wish to take the seven-thirty train to Washington to-morrow."

"Ye—yes, sah. Yes, sah!" promptly responded the man, astonished, but too frightened and anxious upon many accounts to let his astonishment be seen.

Lilith looked up in involuntary surprise and pain. It was to herself that he should first have announced his early departure; yet he had given her no hint of it. It was through her that he should have given his orders to the cook, yet he had not done so. It was almost an insult to have ignored her in that pointed

manner. Yet she tried to repudiate the thought that he had intended to humiliate her before the household.

"I must not be morbid or touchy. I must not fancy myself ill used. I will not do so. Tudor does not know —how could he know?—that my dear father—his father—gave all his orders to the house servants through me and that they are not accustomed to any other rule. But what does it matter? How querulous I am getting! Heaven help me," she said, taking herself roundly to task for her feeling of mortification.

But Hereward never addressed a word to her during supper.

And immediately afterward he retired to his little study, where a fire had been kindled, and where his overseer, who had heard of his arrival, was waiting to see him, and there, upon excuse of business, he spent the night, first in going over the farm books with the manager, and afterwards, when left alone, in writing.

Lilith went to her chamber, where she found Nancy ready to serve her in any affectionate manner that was needed.

"I think I will go immediately to bed. I feel very, very tired," she said, wearily, as she dropped into her chair before the fire.

"Yer looks as if yer wasn' o'ny tired ob trabellin', but tired ob life itse'f," said the nurse, looking sorrowfully into the pale face and heavy eyes of her young mistress.

And then Nancy knelt at her feet to take off her shoes and hose.

Lilith was so prostrated in mind and body that as soon as she lay down in her bed the blessed rest of sleep stole over the weary heart and brain. So deep and so long was that sleep of exhaustion that it was late when she awoke. The sun was shining so brightly through the chinks in the window shutters that Lilith knew the morning was advanced. She sat up in bed

and rubbed her eyes. Then she noticed that the second pillow on the bed was perfectly smooth. Her husband had not been in the room all night. She sprang out of bed and looked at her watch. It was seven o'clock. Then she rang her bell.

The housekeeper answered it by entering the room.

"Nancy, where is Mr. Hereward?" she inquired.

"He is gone, honey. How does yer feel dis mornin'?"

"Gone! Mr. Hereward gone?" exclaimed Lilith, incredulously.

"Yes, honey; he went away mor'n an hour ago. How does yer feel this mornin', honey?"

"Gone? Without taking leave of me?"

"Yes, gone. He wouldn't let yer be 'sturbed. He say yer was tired an' needed res'. It was berry t'oughtful ob de young marse, 'caze so yer did need res'. An' I hope it has done yer good. Yer's had a good long sleep. How does yer feel dis mornin', anyhow, honey?"

"Oh, Nancy, Nancy! Why did you let Mr. Hereward go off without taking leave of me? Oh, why, why did you not call me?" demanded Lilith, in a tone of sorrowful reproach.

"Hi, now, Miss Lilif, honey, is I de marster ob de house? Sure I did want to call yer, an' 'posed it sev'ral times, but Marse Tudor wouldn' 'low it. Wouldn' hear ob it, I tell yer, honey. An' yer know w'en de young marse put his foot down—dere it is! An' w'en he say so an' so, it is so an' so! 'Deed I's sorry enuff, Miss Lilif, but I couldn' help ob it, honey."

"Did Cassy have a good breakfast ready in time?"

"Oh, yes, honey, fus' rate. Good coffee an' buckcakes, an' ham an' eggs, an' chicken. Now doan yer go an' take on 'bout not seein' him off. De young marse was t'oughtful 'bout your res' an' comfort, honey, he was. An' yer know gem'en frinks a great

deal more 'bout bodily ease an' healf an' dat dan dey does 'bout de 'fections ob de heart. Dey ain't 'fectionate as we is, honey, an' yer needn't s'pect 'em to be, neider. La! de young marster is a berry fine gem'an, an' a berry good an' great one; but la! he's on'y a man; so wot could yer s'pect? Dey doan mean no harm, honey, when dey walks ober yer feelin's. Dey doan know no better, chile, 'deed dey doan. 'Deed it's de trufe."

"Oh, Nancy! please, please don't talk any more about it," said Lilith, turning her face to the wall and covering her head to hide her tears.

Not long did she indulge her grief. By the time that Nancy had unpacked her mistress' dressing-gown and hung it over the back of her rocking-chair before the fire, and laid the slippers on the rug, Lilith arose.

The March wind was still blowing a hurricane and the house was intensely cold, except in those rooms where great fires were kindled.

Yet, as Lilith could not rest in any place, as soon as she had dressed and breakfasted she wrapped a shawl around her and went through all parts of the mansion, opening closed chambers and closets, examining old stores of household linen, china and plate, all of which she found in such good condition that she complimented Nancy on her housekeeping.

So passed this day, which was Saturday.

On Sunday morning the wind storm seemed at its height, but the sky was clear and bright, and the ground from which the snow had gone for many days, was hard frozen, rendering the roads good for traveling; so Lilith determined to go to church.

She went in the closed carriage, driven by Stephen.

On reaching the building she had only time to pass into her pew just before the services began.

The rector, Mr. Cave, was in the pulpit, as usual, and the church was quite full. Lilith knew from the

general appearance of the congregation that all her friends and neighbors must be present.

But she was too devout to look around for individual recognition.

As the services went on, her perturbed spirit was soothed and strengthened.

The text was a peculiarly comforting one to her:

"And God shall wipe away tears from all faces."

" 'All faces,' " responded Lilith, in her loving heart. " 'All faces.' Not a few favored ones, but from all—'all faces,' God will wipe away the tears."

The discourse that followed the text was strong, tender and comforting, like all the utterances of Mr. Cave.

Lilith, as well as others, was greatly cheered and consoled.

When the services were over, and the benediction had been pronounced, Lilith left the church, to find herself surrounded in the churchyard by all her friends and neighbors, who expressed equal surprise and pleasure at seeing her.

They had not heard of her arrival at the Cliffs.

"When did you come, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Jordon, who was among the first to greet her.

Lilith told her.

"And Mr. Hereward? He is with you, of course."

"No; Mr. Hereward only brought me down on Friday and returned yesterday," Lilith explained.

"Ah! he could not remain absent from his post. But you are not looking well, love. Washington did not agree with you," continued the lady.

"Mr. Hereward thought it best for me to come down here," said Lilith.

"Lilith, my love," said Mrs. Jordon, "I am going to-morrow to Rushmore, to spend a few days with

Hilary. Won't you come, like a darling, to help me bear the racket at 'Headlong Hall?' "

"Don't do it, Mrs. Hereward," exclaimed old Jab, in his shrillest tone. "The place is more of a lunatic asylum than ever. My mad step-son has bitten several of the negroes, and they have all gone raving mad."

Mrs. Jab laughed.

"It is true, Lilith. But it is amusing. Do you remember Jupe? He is more stage-struck than his young master, and he is crazy to have the possessor of Rushmore Manors sell out his patrimonial estate and invest in the traveling circus and wild beast business."

"My dear friends," expostulated the doctor, "I am tempted to leave you all to your own devices, and allow you to catch pleurisies and pneumonias by standing out here in this wind, so that I may have plenty of practice, but conscience won't allow me to do it. Get into your carriages and go home. I set the example. Good-morning to one and all."

With these words the jolly doctor handed Lilith into her carriage, and then got into his own gig and drove off.

Lilith went home through the spectral, wintry woods, lifting their skeleton branches to the cold, bright blue sky.

Lilith was feeling happier;—the consoling and strengthening promises of the Word; the hearty and affectionate greeting of her friends—all these had cheered her heart and raised her spirits; and the drive through the woods in the keen March air had given color to her pale cheeks, so that on reaching home Nancy received her with an exclamation.

"W'y, honey, yer looks like anoder pusson, 'deed does yer! Yer ought to go out ebery day; 'deed yer ought."

Lilith smiled and promised that she would do so.

Accordingly, on Monday morning the young mis-

tress of the manor said that she herself would drive to the village to get her letters, if there should be any for her; and she ordered the pony chaise to be brought to the door.

When Lilith reached the village and entered the postoffice, the postmaster exclaimed aloud, with surprise:

"Why, my dear madam, I thought you had gone back to the city with Mr. Hereward! And only half an hour ago, under that impression, I acted on general orders and sent all your mail on to Washington," he said, with a look of regret.

She had some shopping to do in the village, some groceries and hardware to select and order, and so it was late in the afternoon when she at length got through with her business and turned homeward.

It was nearly dark when she reached the Cliffs.

She was met as usual by Nancy, who, with a happy smile, said:

"I's got a s'prise for yer, honey—a wisiter who will cheer yer up!"

"Who is it?" inquired Lilith, as her heart bounded with hope—hope that her husband had relented and returned. "Who is it, Nancy?"

"You jes' go inter de parlor an' see fo' yerse'f, honey!" said the woman, with a little laugh.

Lilith, expecting to see her husband, opened the door with a glad smile, and—was caught in the arms and pressed to the bosom of Mr. Alfred Ancillon!

"Oh, heaven have mercy on me, how cruel this is!" exclaimed the disappointed and terrified young wife, as she freed herself from the visitor's embrace, and sank exhausted into a chair. "You here, and I thought you were in California, or on your way to Australia!"

"I know you think I am ubiquitous—and so I am in some senses," said the visitor.

CHAPTER XXXI

ON THE BRINK

Lilith sank into a chair, and dropped her head upon her hands.

"You give me but a cold welcome. I think even your housekeeper gave me a warmer one," said the visitor, as he threw himself into a seat opposite hers.

Lilith moaned, but made no reply in words.

"My child, why do you not speak to me?" he inquired.

"Oh, how can I speak? What have I to say that would not wound you?" breathed Lilith from behind her sheltering hands.

"Have I no rights, then, that you are 'bound to respect?' "

"My husband has the only rights over me. His peace, his honor, his happiness, must only be considered in this. And, indeed—indeed, you must go, and you must never come again."

"By the pipers!" exclaimed the stroller, with his reckless laugh, "this is a new reading of the Decalogue. There is one of the Ten Commandments, I remember—I learned them once at the parish church of my native village—which is a little at variance with your declaration; but, to be sure, there is another Scripture, 'Wives, obey your husbands,' which may indorse it. Has Hereward forbidden you to see me, Lilith?"

"No, he has not. He does not even know that you are in the country. He thinks, as I thought, that you are on your way to Australia. How is it that you are here, when the papers spoke of you as being in California, concluding a brilliant engagement there, and being on the eve of a voyage to Australia?" inquired Lilith.

Mr. Alfred Ancillon threw himself back in his chair, and laughed aloud. The "elegant" man of the world seemed transformed at once into the reckless Bohemian.

"My dear Lilith," he said, "in our line of life there are 'wheels within wheels;' mysteries on the posters as well as on the stage; plots behind the scenes as well as before the audience. My white lily—you are very white just now—my name went to California, but not my person. The name which I first made famous belongs now more to the troupe than it does to me. I would not go to California. I never stirred from Washington until I came down here."

"You—never left Washington!" gasped Lilith.

"Never, until I came down here. The troupe were going to a city where I was not known. I would not go with them at any price, so as a last resort I was induced to hire out my popular name to a most wonderful imitator, and whom the stage artist, with the aid of a beautiful black wig, false black eyebrows, false black moustache, paint, padding, and 'symmetricals,' will make up into a passable Alfred Ancillon behind the footlights. But why were you so surprised to see me? You must have received my letter?"

"Your letter? No. I received no letter from you," exclaimed Lilith, as a mortal terror paled her cheeks at the recollection of her morning's mail, which had been returned to Washington by the postmaster, under the impression that she herself had gone back thither. That mail would fall into the hands of her husband. That letter might be opened by him, for it was an understood matter between them that either, in the absence of the other, might open letters that seemed to require immediate attention, unless, indeed, they should be marked private.

"Lilith! what is the matter with you? Why do you

turn pale at the announcement that I have written to you?" demanded the visitor.

"Your letter will fall into the hands of Mr. Hereward and cause— Oh, Heaven! what woe may it not cause!" she moaned.

"Lilith!" exclaimed Ancillon starting up in alarm— "what do you mean? How could my letter fall into the hands of Hereward? Hereward is in Washington."

"And the letter has gone to Washington," she moaned.

"WHAT!" he cried, growing as pale as herself.

"I say the letter has gone to Washington! Sent there by the postmaster, under the impression that I had returned to the city with Mr. Hereward."

"The confounded donkey! Why did he not wait for orders before daring to do such a thing? He is unfit for his post!" exclaimed Ancillon, all the more vehemently because he felt that he himself was, under the very peculiar circumstances, much more to blame than was the simple village postmaster.

"But, oh! why did you do such a reckless deed as to write to me at all?" moaned Lilith.

"To announce my arrival. It seemed so safe both to write and come. Hereward was in Washington —you here."

"How did you know that?"

"My child, he is of sufficient importance in the world to have all his motions chronicled by the papers; but, indeed, it was not to the papers alone that I owed my information. You should have got that letter on Sunday morning."

"Our post-office is never open on Sundays," said Lilith.

"Then you should have got it this morning, and you would have done so but for the stupidity of your postmaster."

"And now it will certainly fall into the hands of my husband!"

"Still, he would scarcely open your letter, Lilith?"

"Yes, he would, unless it were marked 'private,' as he allows me to open all his own except so marked. He says we have no secrets from each other! I know that he has none from me and he thinks that I have none from him! Ah, would to Heaven I had not!" she earnestly prayed.

"You have no secrets of your own kept from your husband, Lilith."

"No, thank Heaven! I have none of my own!"

"Then since this is not your mystery, but mine, why should it be such an intolerable burden on your heart and conscience, Lilith?"

"Because it is something that I keep from him! And I grieve to keep anything from him who has no concealments from me," moaned Lilith. Then, with a sudden change of tone, she inquired: "What did you write in that letter? Did you make any allusions to—to—"

"The situation? My life's precious secret? No, Lilith, certainly not! I merely announced the fact I had discovered that you were to be brought down here by Mr. Hereward and left here for your health; that you would again be alone and that I should take advantage of the circumstance to come down and visit you."

"And, oh! What will my husband think—what would any man think on reading such a letter as that, addressed to his wife?" groaned Lilith.

Mr. Alfred Ancillon fell back in his chair, shook his black curls and indulged in one of his long, silvery peals of laughter before he answered.

" 'What would any man think?' Why, if he were a jealous, suspicious, evil-imagining man, he would be

sure to think that his wife had an ardent, persistent and perhaps a favored lover!"

"Oh, heaven of heavens, what shall I do?" exclaimed Lilith, dropping her crimsoned face into her hands again.

"Don't fret! It is alarming! I felt it to be so myself when I first heard that my dispatches were likely to fall into the hands of the enemy! But I never permit myself to wail over the inevitable. 'What is beyond remedy should be beyond regret.' That is good philosophy! That is 'wisdom in solid chunks!' " said Ancillon, gayly.

"But, oh! when he confronts me with that letter! —as he will do!—and demands an explanation—what can I say to him?" wailed Lilith.

"Say nothing! 'Least said is soonest mended!' That is good philosophy also! Laugh at him! Make light of it! That is the way in which you must meet the difficulty, Lilith."

"Oh, I cannot. I cannot prevaricate. I must either refuse to explain, or—I must tell the truth. Oh, release me from my promise. Oh, let me tell my husband."

"Lilith! You are mad—stark mad. It is well I bound you by an oath you dare not break, or you would betray and ruin me without the least hesitation. Bah! I won't be melodramatic over all this. In a word, my child, I charge you by your duty to me —and if you are a Christian you are bound to acknowledge that you do owe some duty even to me—"

"My first duty is to my husband," murmured Lilith, in a very low but firm voice.

"Well, granted. Your first duty is to your husband. So let your duty to me pass out of the question. Still, I charge you by the oath you have registered in Heaven, Lilith Hereward, never to reveal my secret,

except in the contingency agreed between us—a contingency scarcely possible to happen."

"Then Heaven have mercy on me; for I know not what the next twenty-four hours may bring forth," groaned Lilith.

"Why—what do you expect them to develop?" inquired Ancillon, with more uneasiness than he had intended to betray.

"Mr. Hereward will get that letter to-morrow morning. As it is not marked private, he may open it and read it. Can you suppose that after reading such a letter as that, addressed to his wife, he will quietly remain in Washington? No; believe me, he will take the first train to Frosthill, and be here by to-morrow evening, at latest. The one chance, the only hope, is that he will be too busy to look into any correspondence, and will frank it all back to me here."

As Lilith spoke the bell rang.

"Will you come in to tea?" she inquired, wearily.

"Yes, for the last time. I will not stay in the house, or even in the neighborhood, to compromise you, my poor child. I will just take a cup of tea with you, and then—take my leave. Meanwhile, will you 'take' my arm to the dining-room?"

Lilith laid her hand lightly on his sleeve and they went out together.

Stephen, the groom and coachman, dressed in his Sunday clothes, stood waiting.

"Where is Alick?" inquired his mistress, as she handed him a cup of tea to be served to her guest.

"Oh! Alick, mist'ess? I fink Alick has gone luny ag'in, for soon's ebber he put up de hosses arter dribin' yer home f'om de pos'-office, he run away offen de place, Alick did—'deed he did, young mist'ess—so A'n' Nancy she tole me to come in an' wait on de table. 'Deed it's de trufe."

"Very well, that will do. Hand Mr. Ancillon the rolls."

When tea was over, Lilith and her guest returned to the parlor. And then Mr. Ancillon said:

"I am going to bid you good-bye, Lilith. 'It may be for years and it may be forever;' for it is good-bye in earnest, this time."

She could not oppose his resolution. She could not ask him to stay longer; she could not even invite him to repeat his visit. She could only sob forth her adieu and prayers:

"Oh, may heaven be with you, my dear, my dear. My heart bleeds to see you go. I shall pray for you night and morning—yes, morning and night will I pray."

When he had gone Lilith threw herself on the sofa and gave way to a paroxysm of bitterest tears and sobs.

Lilith slipped from her recumbent position on the lounge, knelt and dropped her head in her hands, and prayed earnestly for that strange visitor, whose tragic story had wrung her heart, yet whose appearance always filled her with dismay.

Then she thought of the husband whom she loved and honored above every other being in the world—who was, indeed, all the world of love to her.

She could not satisfy Hereward without betraying Ancillon, and even forswearing herself.

What should she do? Of whom could she ask advice?

She could do nothing. Her hands were tied because her tongue was tied.

If her husband should open and read Ancillon's letter to her, what would he, what could he think? If he should come down to Cloud-Capped Cliffs and confront her with that letter in his hands, and demand an explanation, what could she say?

She might refer him to her whole short, blameless life, and to the esteem in which she had been held by his father, and was now held by all his friends; but what would all that be worth in the face of this unexplained letter, and to the judgment of a jealous husband?

For Lilith could not conceal from herself—from her deeply humiliated self—the mortifying truth which she perceived, with burning blushes, that her husband was jealous—jealous of Alfred Ancillon! Yes, and oh, horror! that to all false appearances he had cause sufficient for jealousy!

This being the state of affairs, how should she meet her husband?

Yet how could she avoid the meeting?

A mad impulse seized the distracted girl—an impulse to fly from the coming ordeal—to fly, perhaps, from life itself. This was the second occasion on which Lilith had felt the Tempter's power. But she did not yield to it; she met and resisted it by prayer.

"Miss Lilif, honey, yer gwine set up all night? It's 'leben o'clock, honey!"

This interruption, it is almost needless to say, came from Nancy, who had opened the door and entered the room.

"Is it so late? I will go to bed at once," said Lilith, rising.

"Dat young youf gone, I hears, Miss Lilif. Steve say how he went 'way 'rectly arter tea. 'Deed I was hopes he'd cheer yer up a bit! But Steve he say he set mumchance all de time, 'dout a word to t'row at a dog! Come to see a lady, an' be no more entertainin' 'an dat! 'Deed I calls it flyin'!"

"'Flying?" inquired Lilith, with a forced smile—"how flying, Nancy?"

"W'y, flyin' right slap into de face ob good manners. Dat's wot it is! People's allers flyin'! But I didn'

s'pect how dis young youf was gwine to fly! 'Caze, sence yer been gone, I done hear mighty good 'ports ob him! 'Deed has I!"

"What have you heard of him, Nancy?" inquired the young lady, with more interest than she had yet shown in the conversation.

"Hush, honey! Dem young ladies at Rushmore—leastways at Broad Manors—leastways— But 'deed I dunno w'ere dey 'longs to rightfully, 'caze sometimes dey is at one place an' sometimes dey is at t'oder—I call dat flyin', too, 'deed does I! 'Caze 'spectable young ladies ought to hab some settle' home."

"Do you mean the Misses Miles?"

"Yes, honey, dem. W'y dey finks de sun an' moon rises an' sets long of dis young youf! An' 'deed Aunt Jessie, de cook at Broad Manors, say how Miss Harriet Miles is dead in love long ob him ebber sence dey fust met at Rushmore!"

"Come, come, Nancy! I really cannot allow you to speak so freely of a young lady," said Lilith, gravely.

"La, honey, it ain't me as says it! It is ole Marse Jab's Jessie! W'ich she says as Mr. Hilary an' all de ladies finks a heap ob dat young youf."

"Youth, Nancy! Mr. Ancillon is not a youth. He is a man of middle age."

"Him!" said the woman, pausing in her work of covering up the fire, and staring at her mistress.

"Yes; he is thirty-six years old."

"I 'clar, I didn' fink he was more'n nineteen! How 'ceivin' some people's looks is, to be sure."

"He looks much younger than his age, because he is a little below the medium height and he is slender and wears his black hair long and curling, and he is always gay and boyish in manner."

"An' han'some! Umph! humph! Hush, honey! Whoop you hosses! He's broke hearts in his time, you bet."

"Come, Nancy, never mind Mr. Ancillon. Tell me—has Alick returned?"

"No, honey. He took to his heels soon's ebber he cotch his eyes onto dat young—w'ich I meant to say dat ge'man! He's gone, honey."

A few moments after that, Lilith had retired to bed, to have her waking thoughts and sleeping visions haunted by rage, jealousy and disaster.

CHAPTER XXXII

A THUNDERBOLT

Hereward reached Washington late on Saturday afternoon, and without stopping for rest or refreshment, weary as he was with his long journey, went at once from the station to the political meeting where he was due—and from which, late at night, he went to his room in the hotel, nearly worn out in body and mind, almost thoroughly disgusted with politics and public life, and with himself to boot, and needing above all things the soothing and refreshing ministrations he had been accustomed to receive at the hands of his one little devoted worshipper.

She was not there, and his neglected room looked dreary and comfortless enough without her.

There was no bright fire, no easy-chair with dressing-gown and slippers laid convenient, no neatly laid little table, with spirit lamp and silver kettle and china tea service for two; and worse than all, there was no bright, glad, eager little face to welcome him, to worship him, to make him feel that to one, at least, on earth he was a god.

Instead of all this, there was the cold, damp room, that struck a chill to his heart, the blackened grate,

the littered table, chairs and carpet, over which were widely strewn books, journals, letters, pamphlets, and waste paper, all well peppered with dust, soot and ashes, that had been blown down by the high wind into the cold hearth that was so near the roof of the house and the top of the chimney.

It was too late to ring up a servant to remedy this, so Hereward, with a grunt of disgust, undressed and went to his comfortless bed.

He had got rid of Lilith, the "midge," the "brainless little idiot who would permit herself to be fooled by any fop who could chatter soft nonsense into her silly ear." She was two hundred miles away, exiled to the lonely country house at Cloud Cliffs, where she could trouble him no more. And he had his own way! But yet "he was not happy." On the contrary, he felt quite miserable. He had not anticipated this sort of wretchedness.

Your average human being—yes, and often your superior human being as well—will blame everybody and everything in the universe rather than his own dear self.

So Tudor Hereward, the conscientious Christian, the close logician, eloquent orator and eminent politician, lying on his uneasy couch, lied (unconsciously) to himself when he silently execrated "the low state of social life and morals which left the peace and honor of an honest man at the mercy of any brainless coxcomb who had nothing better to do in the world than to make mischief."

Hereward had not slept since his parting with Lilith.

It followed, then, that though he lay awake a long time,

"Chewing the cud of bitter thoughts,"

when at length he did fall asleep, he slept the dream-

less sleep of utter oblivion, the last two days being so entirely blotted out of his memory that when he awoke and missed Lilith from his side, and saw around him the cold, cheerless and disorderly room, the recollection of his loss fell upon him with the shock of a sudden bereavement.

He pulled his bell with a sudden jerk that soon brought the porter to the room.

The man, without waiting to be blamed—in words—became profuse in apologies.

Hereward paid not the slightest attention to the man's words, but got up and began to dress himself.

Then he went down to breakfast; as it was nine o'clock, he found all the tables well filled. At his table he found the old lady-boarder who usually sat there.

She welcomed him at once.

"Ah, Mr. Hereward! I am glad to see you back again. When did you arrive?"

"Last evening, madam."

"Oh! And Mrs. Hereward—too much fatigued with her journey to appear this morning?"

"Mrs. Hereward, madam, is at home, in the country. She will not return here during this season."

"Oh, what a pity! Just as she was beginning to be known and admired so much. What a loss to society! But I can well believe that her health required rest. She has been looking pale and ill of late. Take care of her, Mr. Hereward. She is the loveliest woman I have ever seen in my life."

At dinner—which on Sundays was earlier as well as more regularly attended than on week days, for the obvious reason that nearly all the boarders were within—Hereward met many friends, and ran the gauntlet of inquiries about his wife—and these were not merely the usual polite formulas, but questions of real, personal interest.

This also set him to thinking. Had he underrated Lilith? Had her very devotion to him dwarfed her in his estimation? Was she—whom he had considered at the very best an unformed child with crude opinions; one who habitually acted on impulse, and who had within her, latent hereditary evils which only required time and temptation to develop—was she, indeed, one formed to win the esteem and affection, and not only those, but even respect and admiration, of men and women whose approbation was honor?

On Monday morning, as he was about to leave his room to go to the Capitol, there came a rap at the door, followed by the entrance of the little Frenchwoman whom Lilith had engaged weeks before as their laundress.

She courtesied, looked around, courtesied again, and said:

"Bon jour, monsieur. Ou donc est madame?"

"Madame is at home in the country."

"Hélas! Je suis en désepoir!"

Hereward condescended to explain that madame was away to recruit her health; that she, Madame Dubois, should still have the washing.

"Even Lilith's laundress grieves for her absence," he said to himself. "Though that is probably a matter of self-interest," he added, grimly.

Had he not known her as she really was? Had he underrated her character and ability? Worse than all, had he wronged her by his jealousies and suspicions?

It was in vain that he tried to escape from these questions—to trample them down and out.

It was late when the House adjourned and he started to return to his hotel.

Then, as if the phantom of his thought was to pursue him in every form, he was joined by his aged friend, Senator ——, the same eminent statesman with

whom Lilith had walked and talked at the President's reception.

"Pleased to see you in your place to-day. Never would have done for you to be absent at that debate," he said.

Hereward acknowledged the implied compliment with a bow and with a few words of deprecation.

They talked of the bill for a few moments, and then Senator —— said:

"I hope Mrs. Hereward is well."

"She is not strong. She is at home in the country," replied Hereward.

"Indeed! I am very sorry to hear that. Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Oh, no; nothing serious with her health. A country girl brought from the quiet life and pure air of the mountains, and plunged into the distractions and late hours of city life, must feel the change, you understand," said Hereward, in a non-committal way.

"Ah, yes, yes, she is better off where she is, no doubt. She is a gem, my dear boy—a gem of the purest water. Where in this imperfect world did you discover such a perfect one?"

"She was a ward of my father, brought up by him from her infancy."

"Ah! that may account for it. A nature fine by inheritance and refined by training."

They had now reached the hotel, and as the senator uttered these last words he bowed and walked on.

Tudor Hereward entered the hotel and went up to his room, thinking more about his absent wife than ever—having obtained several new views of Lilith through other people's unprejudiced eyes.

He changed his dress and went down to dinner, where, as he sat waiting the leisure of the waiter, he overheard some conversation destined to make a strange, indelible impression on his mind.

"Zuniga? Oh, he has left the city. Saw him off myself—yesterday morning, in the Baltimore and Ohio express."

"Queer fellow! No end of trouble to his uncle!"

"So I've heard. Was it true that at one time he actually joined a troupe of strolling players?"

"Oh, no! I fancy not so bad as that, though he is eccentric enough, to be sure! Here, waiter!"

And the talk turned abruptly from Zuniga to the question of "Julien" or "mock turtle."

Here was food for thought. Were Ancillon and Zuniga one and the same being? Did Lilith know them to be one? Had the fellow flirted with the simple country girl, in both characters? Had she encouraged this? If so, then Lilith was more deceitful than he had ever suspected her to be. No doubt of it, since she had deceived not only himself, but all their world, into believing her to be one of the most excellent of the earth.

Hereward had determined to devote this evening to preparing a speech which should be as a thunderbolt to destroy that obnoxious bill and overwhelm its supporters.

He went to his room and set to work; but it was a long while before his strength of will and power of concentration enabled him to grasp and hold control of the subject.

It was so near morning when he finished his work that he only threw himself on the outside of his bed to take an hour of needful rest.

Nevertheless, being so worn out in body and mind, he fell fast asleep and slept on for several hours, and until a knock at the door aroused him.

He started up, collected his scattered faculties, and opened the door.

"Your letters, sir," said the porter, putting about

half a peck of them on the table and then going to the grate to attend to the fire.

Hereward looked at his watch and saw that it was nine o'clock.

He had overslept himself to an unprecedented extent.

He made his toilet in haste, went downstairs, got a cup of coffee and returned to his room.

It had been put into some order and left.

He locked the door and sat down to his correspondence, having two hours to devote to that duty before it should be necessary for him to leave for the Capitol.

The first letter that he took up, however, was fated so to fix his attention as to prevent his going any farther into his correspondence that day.

The first thing that attracted his attention about it was the red-lettered stamp of the post-office printed diagonally across the front—

"FORWARDED."

He looked at the first postmark, "Washington;" at the second, "Frosthill." He thought it was for himself; for he had only seen "Tudor Hereward," written in a large, masculine hand—two letters of the heavy stamp having blotted out the "Mrs."

"Ah! this letter followed me to Frosthill and then back again. Who could have written to me at Frosthill? Some one who heard that I had gone down there and who had 'an axe to grind' in that neighborhood, I suppose," said Hereward, as he opened the envelope and drew out the letter.

Now, think of the state of mind in which the man was; remember the conversation he had heard at the dinner table of the hotel, and then judge of the feelings with which he must have read the following letter:

"Washington, March 10, 18—.

"My Darling Lilith: I have just ascertained that you are again relegated to the retirement of Cloud Cliffs where, languishing alone, you play 'Marianna in the Moated Grange;' 'The Lady of Shalot;' 'Viola'—

'Letting concealment like the worm i' the bud
Prey on her damask cheek.'

Like, in short, any other forlorn damsel or deserted dame in fable or poetry. So now, my Lilith, I propose to take advantage of the old man's absence and run down to Cloud Cliffs to see you, and cheer you up. You will get this letter on Monday morning. Expect to see me on Monday evening.

"Your affectionate and devoted

"Ancillon."

We cannot attempt to describe the mood of mind in which Hereward finished this letter. Let it suffice to say that it was a mood in which honest and honorable men, nay, Christian and religious men, who never dreamed of breaking the law of God, have been tempted to commit murder.

Forgotten was that important bill before the House; forgotten the coming debate; forgotten his great speech; forgotten all the duties of his position; forgotten his ambition.

Remembered only, imaginary wrong, dishonor and vengeance.

With a face as white and grim as death and the grave, he arose, prepared for a sudden journey, and strode down the stairs and out of the house.

Those who met him on the avenue, and spoke to him, afterwards reported that he strode on without answering or seeming even to see or to hear them.

He caught his train by a hair's breadth of time, and with murder in his heart, sped on to his home in West Virginia. God have mercy and save him.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DOOMED

Thou hast done well to tell thy heart,
That good lies in the bitterest part,
And thou wilt profit by grief's smart.

But bitter hours come to all,
When even truths like these will pall,
Sick hearts for humbler comfort call.

Then I would have thee strive to see
That good and evil come to thee
As one of a great family.

—*Adelaide Anne Proctor.*

Meanwhile, that same fated Tuesday morning which saw Tudor Hereward start on his sudden, vengeful journey from Washington City to West Virginia, saw Lilith rise from her restless bed, pale, anxious and foreboding.

Her fitful sleep had been troubled by dark dreams, whose outlines she could not recall with any distinctness, but which had left upon her spirit a vague horror of darkness, like the shadow of approaching calamity.

Nancy, ever vigilant, waited for no summons, but hearing her mistress move and sigh, entered her room to assist in her morning toilet.

Lilith, still with the black cloud lowering over her spirit, like the forerunner of the storm, went downstairs, followed by her faithful servant.

She entered the bright, warm, attractive little parlor, where the clear, fragrant cedar fire was burning, with an elegant little breakfast-table and a comfortable arm-chair drawn up before it.

Nancy brought in the breakfast, and stood waiting and chatting, with the privilege of a favored servant, while her mistress tried to eat.

" 'Deed I reckon as Alick has 'mancipated de plantation, sure enuff now! He's t'reatened to do it offen enuff, an' now I reckon as he's gone an' done it."

"Has he not come back, then?"

"No, honey, not he!"

"Well, I suppose he will come back when he feels disposed," said Lilith, indulgently.

"I reckon as he has gone ober to Broad Manners to hire hisse'f to Ole Mr. Jab Jordon. I don't call dat place Broad Manners myse'f! I calls it Bad Manners, w'ich is de properes' name for it. An' ef Alick hires long ob ole Mr. Jab Jordon, he'll wish he hadn't, dat's all! He'll wish hisse'f dead, he will! Yes, he'll wish de debbil had got him 'fo' ebber Ole Jab Jordon did! Hush, honey! Nobody in dis worl' can do nuffin with Ole Jab 'cept 'tis Mrs. Jab! An' she can't do much wid him! How an' ebber, I s'pects w'en de baby 'ribes dat will humanate him a little!"

"The baby!" exclaimed Lilith, surprised into taking an interest in Nancy's gossip.

"Yes, honey, de heir w'ich dey expects at Broad Manners. I hope as it won't be de heir to Bad Manners as well. 'Deed do I!"

"When is this heir expected to arrive?"

"Airly in de summer. So I hear f'om ole Aunt Molly, w'ich is de housekeeper at de place."

Lilith said no more. She had finished her pretense at breakfast. Leaning back wearily in her chair, she inquired:

"Has Stephen been to the post-office?"

"He's gone, but he hasn't come back yet," replied Nancy, as she took the breakfast service away.

As soon as the table was arranged, and covered with its red cloth, and the books and nick-nacks were re-

placed upon it, Lilith opened her work-box and took out some needle-work upon which to employ herself.

She sat there sewing in solitude for more than an hour, and until she was interrupted by the re-entrance of Nancy, who said, apologetically:

"Yer know I doan offen 'low yer to be boddered wid beggars, Miss Lilif, w'ich, praise be de Lord, dere ain't many ob dat sort 'roun' yere, nohow, but dis po' young gal do look so pitiful I couldn' help comin' to tell yer 'bout her; 'sides w'ich, I t'ought it would 'vert yer to see her an' do somefin' for her."

"Yes, yes," said Lilith, eagerly catching at the opportunity to do good to some fellow-being, and never dreaming of the grave consequences involved in her good intentions. "Yes, Nancy. Bring the poor creature in here to me. A young girl did you say she was?"

"A little young gal, 'bout sixteen or sebenteen years ob age, I reckon. But she's de pitifullest po' fing as ebber you see."

Nancy went out and soon returned with the young woman in question.

Lilith looked up, to see standing before her a slight girl, half clothed in thin and tattered black clothes, with an old and worn red crape shawl thrown over her head and shoulders; her small feet in broken shoes, without stockings.

Lilith shuddered to see so frail a creature so thinly clad in such freezing weather.

"Come to the fire at once, dear. Sit down here," said the young lady, tenderly, as she drew a low, cushioned chair to the corner.

The shivering girl courtesied and took the seat, sitting modestly, deprecatingly, upon the very edge.

"You are tired and cold. Lean back; put your feet to the fire; try to make yourself comfortable, dear," said Lilith.

The poor young stranger's gypsy face broke into a faint but grateful smile, as she reclined in the seat and put her small feet to the fire, which soon drew from her sodden shoes little clouds of steam.

"Poor little soul! how cold and wet you are! Nancy, go first and bring a glass of wine and a cracker for her to take while you are preparing something better."

Nancy, really as much interested as her mistress, went out, and Lilith turned to the poor young waif.

She was a very pretty creature, notwithstanding the pinched poverty and pallor of her face. The old red shawl had fallen from her figure, revealing a shapely little head, covered thickly with fine, jet black, crisply curling hair; a small face, with delicate features and dark complexion, lighted up by a pair of large, brilliant black eyes, to which famine lent its fiercer light.

Not until Nancy had come in with a glass of rich old port wine and a plate of crackers and had gone out again to prepare more substantial food, and the famished girl had eaten the crackers and drank the wine, that sent a glow into her pallid cheeks, did Lilith venture to question the stranger. And even then the young lady only spoke that she might know whether the latter were in need of sympathy and counsel as well as of more substantial help.

"You are a stranger in this neighborhood, I think," said Lilith.

"Yes, lady," replied the girl, in a soft, rich voice, and a slightly foreign accent.

"Have you friends here?"

"No, madame."

"Forgive me if I question you. It is not from suspicion or from curiosity, indeed, but from real interest in you and a deep desire to assist you," said Lilith, gently.

"Madame is too very good to care for such as I. Let

madame ask what she will. I will answer zee holy truth."

"Where, then, is your home?"

The girl lifted her large sad eyes to the lady's face with a wistful look, and then lifting them towards heaven, she raised her hand and pointed, saying:

"Zere, zere is my home, when my penance is finissed."

"And have you no home here in this world?"

"No, meeladie. Lucille has no home here."

"Are you an orphan, then, Lucille?"

"Yes, meeladie."

"Poor child! Well, you shall not want a home or friend henceforth."

"Meeladie is too good to poor Lucille."

"Will you mind telling me how you came to be here in this strange neighborhood, and alone?" inquired Lilith.

"Viz mon mari I come."

"Your husband! Are you married?" exclaimed Lilith, in surprise.

"Oui, madame."

"Where is your husband now that he does not take care of you?"

"Hélas, madame, I know not. He left zee troupe and left me."

"My poor girl, your husband belonged to the troupe of traveling players, then?"

"Yes, meeladie, he was of zee troupe—Monsieur Ancillon, Monsieur Alfred Ancillon. Hélas, madame, what is it then? And what have I said?" inquired the stranger, in alarm, as Lilith, with an exclamation of horror, buried her face in her hands.

"Monsieur Alfred Ancillon! Did you say Monsieur Alfred Ancillon?" breathlessly demanded Lilith.

"Yes, meeladie!—he—"

"And he was your husband?"

"Oui, madame."

"And he left you in poverty, in rags, homeless, friendless, starving, freezing? I don't believe it! I can't believe it!" exclaimed Lilith, vehemently.

The stranger girl looked hurt, and answered with a gentle dignity which for a moment raised her above her rags and squalor.

"I tell madame zee holy truth. I force not my grief on zee notice of madame. Madame to question does condescend. Lucille answers viz zee holy truth. If madame vill not believe, it is of not importe. Nozing is of much importe in zis world of sadness."

"My poor girl," said Lilith, touched by her manner, "I am sure that you believe you are telling me the truth. But it cannot be truth. There is some great mistake somewhere. I know Monsieur Ancillon well. He would never have been so wicked as to leave you so destitute."

"Madame must keep her opinion. I veel not deespute it."

"Will you tell me how, and when, and why he—your husband—left you?"

"Zee troupe vent on vizout him, madame. He stay behind. Zen he go, he leave me, I know it not ven I wake on zee morning. I look zat he vill come back; but he comes not. I haff no money. I valk on zee railroad line to Blackveele to zee troupe. But he is no viz zem. Zey vill not haff me. To sing or to dance I know not. So zey vill not haff me. I valk all zee way back to dis Frosveele. He may perhaps be here waiting for me. But he is not here. I lodge viz one pauvre femme, one black madame in a little housie in zee trees. Dis was two monze gone, madame. I haff no money, mais I gif her my clothes—now one piece, zen anoder; so, and see sell zem to buy food for see and me. But zee black madame fell seeke, and my

clothes—zey is all gone but as you sall see, meeladie. Behold!"

And the poor girl arose and displayed her tatters.

"Yezdy day no food in zee leetle housie. Ziz mornin' no food, no fire. I go to zee frozen trees, I break brush and breeng it in and mek zee fire. Zen I come out to get food. I come here to zee goode madame. Voila tout."

"I will see that you and your friend are made comfortable. You shall want no more. I am very glad that you came to me. I shall be so happy to relieve you. But here comes my maid with your dinner. When you have eaten it I will see that a basket is filled for your friend," said Lilith, as Nancy entered with a large waiter, on which was arranged all the accessories of a comfortable meal.

Lilith arose and cleared the little table of books and work-box. And when Nancy had arranged the meal upon it, Lilith told Lucille to draw up her resting-chair and partake.

"Poor, starved chile! how she do gormandize!" was the mental comment of Nancy, as at a sign from her mistress she left the room.

And she did. She literally cleaned the platters, consumed everything that was set before her.

Lilith would willingly have ordered another relay of all the viands, but she really feared the poor, famished creature, who seemed to have no control over her abnormal appetite, might make herself ill. So when all the dishes were cleaned out, Lilith rang for Nancy to take away the service, and then said to her humble guest:

"If you will come upstairs with me I will try to find something to make you comfortable."

Lucille arose and followed her benefactress. Lilith led the way into her own bed-chamber, locked the door, lest she should be interrupted in her almsgiving,

and then made the poor girl sit down in the arm-chair while she herself unlocked wardrobes and bureaus, and selected from them the needful warm clothing for the stranger.

Lilith had but a very limited stock of wearing apparel, and none that were well worn. She bought but few dresses, and gave them away before they were half worn out. So it followed that all the articles selected by her for this poor girl were in excellent condition. Warm flannel skirts and hosiery, a thick, black serge suit, a black waterproof cloak, with large cape, hood and sleeves, a pair of thick walking boots, and a pair of gloves.

Lilith tied all in a bundle, with the exception of the cloak and the shoes and stockings, which she insisted that the girl should put on then and there.

When this arrangement was completed, and the old, useless shoes—with the senseless acquisitiveness of the poor in hoarding all their possessions—were crammed into the bundle, Lilith put a five-dollar note in the hand of the girl, and then led the way down to the little parlor, where Nancy, according to order, was waiting with a large basket of provisions for the girl and her sick friend.

"Now, my poor child, I think you had better wait here, until my coachman comes back from the post-office, when I can send you and your parcels home in the pony carriage," said Lilith, kindly.

"Oh! meeladie, a tousand tanks! You heap good in good! But, meeladie, zee way it is not far. Over zee leetle point, over zee leetle riviere. I can valk, tres biên," replied Lucille, who looked much brighter and stronger since her rest and her meal by the warm fire.

"True as I lib, Miss Lilif, she must lib 'long ob ole Aunt Adah, dere by de crik, right back ob our orchid! 'Tain' nuffin ob no walk, an' I kin tote dis basket ob

wittals along ob her, an' see de ole woman, an' fine out how she is," said the housekeeper.

"I wish you would, Nancy. And if the poor creature needs medical treatment I will send for Dr. Kerr to come to her. It is very strange that any human being should suffer want so near our house. How should it happen, Nancy?"

"Hi, Miss Lilif, how I know? I ain't been across dat crik for mont's and mont's. Berry wrong in Aunt Adah not to let us know nuffin 'bout her sitteration! I calls it flyin'—I do, indeed—downright flyin'," said Nancy, as she took up the heavy basket.

"Bon soir, madame! May angels guard you! May zee Holy Virgin love you! May our Lord bless you! Goode-night, meeladie!" said Lucille, seizing Lilith's hand and kissing it between every sentence.

Nancy only stopped to get a heavy shawl to throw over her head, and then she followed the young foreigner out of the parlor.

Lilith sat down in a great trouble.

The astounding announcement of the girl concerning Mr. Alfred Ancillon had really stunned her into insensibility as to the real meaning and bearing of the asserted fact.

The immediate needs of the poor girl had occupied Lilith's hands and feet, and, perhaps, her most external thoughts; but underneath all was the consciousness of a dull pain—a deep burden of pain—that was becoming more poignant every moment.

Was it probable—was it even possible—that Alfred Ancillon could have been guilty of the atrocity of deserting this young wife in utter destitution, and in a strange land?

As she thought out the subject she came to the generous conclusion that though there might be mystery in this matter—as there was a great cloud of mystery

all around Mr. Alfred Ancillon—there could be no guilt.

Then, as she dismissed this subject from her mind, it seemed only to make room for the entrance of a yet more disturbing one—the letter! Hereward must have received it by this time! And if he should have opened and read it! Oh, what, what could he think of her? What could any man think of his wife under the same circumstances?

Her torturing thoughts were interrupted by the return of Nancy, who broke suddenly into the room exclaiming:

"Well, Miss Lilif, I done been an' seen ole Aunt Adah! Lor'! Dere ain't nuffin 'tall de matter wid dat ole creetur but de rheumatiz! She's crippled up wid de rheumatiz an' it's a good fing as she's got dat dere young w'ite gal to take care ob her! I done sent Cely ober dere wid some opydildock, an' I 'spects she'll be all right ag'in w'en de wedder's settled."

"I hope so. But you must look after her well, Nancy."

"Fac', Miss Lilif! Sure's yer born! Dere! Dere's Steve at las'! Now, wot yer got to say for yerse'f stayin' all dis time? Oh, won't I be glad w'en de marster comes home for good to regellate yer all! Been drinkin' pizen whiskey at Drummond's grog-shop; or spendin' yer time foolin' 'long o' dat yaller gal, Flora?" demanded the housekeeper.

"I come back soon's ebber I could, Miss Lilif! Yes, ma'am, I did, indeed! W'ich I had to wait for de mail to come in, w'ich de train were two hours 'hine-han'."

"No accident, I hope?" said Lilith, anxiously.

"No, ma'am—w'ich I meant to say no sarous one—on'y de freight train run ober de dead tree wot fell 'cross de track an' were pitched ober—leastways de engine were, I beliebe, or somefin' or yudder wot made a 'struction on de yoad; but no one were hurt."

"Well, I am glad it was no worse! You can go now, Stephen," said the young lady.

Lilith drew the key from her pocket and unlocked the mail, and turned it upside down.

Only one poor little letter dropped out.

She snatched it up, hoping it might be from her husband. But, no! The handwriting was strange to her. She opened the envelope and turned to the signature: "Alfred Ancillon."

He had never written to her, before that luckless letter which had gone to Washington and escaped her sight. So that she had never seen his handwriting until this moment.

With a sinking of the heart that now always attended the thought of the handsome and eccentric stranger, she opened the letter.

It was as follows:

"FROSTVILLE, March —, 18—.

"MY DEAREST DEAR LILITH: I am going away from you now, for a certainty. I am going to Chicago. I write only to take leave of you, and to tell you that you may safely direct a letter to me—to the Chicago post-office until called for. Tell me, when you write, where I may safely direct a letter to you. Frosthill will not do, of course. What do you say to Eyrie, Tip Top, Blackville? Either of these would do, I think. If you should see or hear anything of a little French gypsy who answers to the name of Lucille, be good to her, for my sake. I hear that the troupe has dropped her. Hoping to hear from you on my arrival at Chicago, I remain, ever and ever, my darling of darlings, your own "ANCILLON."

Lilith read this letter to the end, feeling more perplexed and troubled than she had felt before in all her life. She could not think. She was past thinking.

She sat before the fire, staring at the lines before her, absorbed and dazed, until a movement in the room, which might have been Nancy or Steve, aroused her from her trance of dismay.

"This must be destroyed at once," she muttered to herself, as she extended her hand to hold the letter over the blaze.

But at that instant her wrist was seized in a firm grip, and the letter withdrawn from her hand.

With a start she turned, and found herself face to face with her husband.

She uttered a piercing shriek, and hid her face in the cushions of her chair.

CHAPTER XXXIV

DRIVEN TO DESPERATION

"DETECTED!" said Tudor Hereward, in a voice of cold scorn that revealed nothing of the fire of jealous rage that was burning and consuming his heart.

She answered not a word in self-defence. She could not speak, but sat cowering and trembling, with her head buried in the cushions of her chair.

He glanced at the letter in his hand. First at its commencement, "My Dearest Dear Lilith," then at its end, "Ever and ever, my darling of darlings, your own Ancillon."

Then he went and turned the key in the door, stepped back to Lilith's side, and said, in a low, hard tone:

"Look up at me."

She raised her pale and distressed face, lifting her large brown eyes appealingly, sorrowfully and prayerfully to his.

"I am going to read this letter from your lover to yourself. I am going to read it aloud," he said, with cold cruelty.

"Oh, Tudor!" she tried to say, though her voice was broken with anguish, "he is not my lover! As the Lord hears me speak the truth, as I hope for salvation, he is not my lover!"

"BE SILENT!" he thundered, losing his self-command. "I will not suffer you to utter falsehoods, perjuries, blasphemies, in my presence! Listen to this letter, and be overwhelmed with shame and dishonor!"

Lilith sank shuddering to the floor and hid her head on the seat of her chair, looking in her pitiable terror and dismay the very image of detected guilt.

Hereward, by an effort of his strong will, recovered his self-control, and with cruel coldness read the fatal letter slowly and distinctly to its end.

Then deliberately folding it up and carefully putting it away in his pocket, he said, with constrained quietness:

"You know the usual end of these disgraceful affairs. What have you to say?"

She raised her agonized face once more, raised her imploring eyes to his, clasped and wrung her hands, and answered, with impassioned earnestness:

"Oh, Tudor! I am true to you! I am true to you! There is not a pulse in my heart that does not beat for you! Oh, there is not a breath of my life that is not an aspiration for you! The Lord, who hears me, knows I speak the truth!"

He looked down on her, his lips writhing with unutterable scorn, as he answered:

"I thought you were a child, and I was half inclined to pity, even while I despised you! But—you never were a child! You were born with inherited evils in which childhood could have no part—evils which have made you, at seventeen years of age, a woman, so old

in sin, so sharp in deception, so hardened in falsehood, that I can feel no mercy for you and shall show no mercy to you! Be sure of that."

"Tudor," she said, slowing rising from her abashed position and reseating herself in her chair, while a certain gentle dignity was faintly perceptible through all her deep distress—"Tudor, I have not asked, and do not want, your mercy, if I have lost your love."

"Lost my love! Ha, ha!" he answered, laughing insultingly. "Why, you never had my love! No! I thank God I have not that humiliation to blush for. That dishonor, that deep degradation does not cling to me. I never loved you!"

"You — never — cared — for — me?" breathed the young wife, in broken tones, and with a dazed expression.

"Never!" he answered, savagely—"Never! I thank the Lord!"

"Then why, oh, why did you marry me?" she murmured, in heartbroken anguish.

"Why? To please my dying father! You had played your game well—for a child! You had played upon the feelings of that honest gentleman, the late Major Hereward. You had made him believe that you were worthy to be his daughter, the wife of his son. And—in some way—had given him the impression that you had honored his son with your love—ha, ha, ha! And so he asked me, as a last earthly concession, to marry you. And so, to please my dying father, I made the greatest sacrifice ever required of man. I gave you my hand; but it was my hand only."

"Oh! if I had but known the truth! If I had but known the truth!" wailed the miserable young wife.

"Or if I had but known it!" mocked Hereward. "But at all events we both know it now, when it is too late," he added, bitterly.

"And our dear father meant all for the best! He

wished only the happiness of his children," muttered Lilith, as if appealing to redeem his memory from reproach.

"I forbid you to speak of Major Hereward, or even to allude to him! You are unworthy to breathe his name!" exclaimed Tudor Hereward, again losing his self-command.

Lilith bowed her head, almost, it seemed, as if in assent to this; for her veneration for her foster-father was very great.

"But you are shifting, evading, prevaricating! And you shall do so no longer!" he added, with stern determination. "I told you that dishonor, such as you have brought upon yourself and me, can have but one termination. I ask you what you could advance against such convicting evidence as the letter I have just read. And now I have something else to tell you! Another letter, a still more damning letter than this, has fallen into my hands! Look up! Listen! I am about to read it to you!"

"Oh, no! pray, pray don't! I am not responsible for that letter! Oh, indeed I am not!"

"You cannot bear to listen! But you shall!" he said, with cold and cruel scorn, as he drew Ancillon's first letter from his breast pocket and began to read it, while Lilith cowered in her chair and buried her head in its cushions, as if she would have shut out the sight of her husband's terrible face, and the sound of the sickening words he read.

He read with cruel distinctness and deliberation when he came to the closing paragraph—

"So I shall take advantage of the old man's absence, and run down there to cheer you up a bit! You will get this letter on Monday morning. Expect to see me on Monday evening."

Hereward finished reading the letter.

Lilith never looked up from her position.

"Speak!" he angrily exclaimed.

"Oh, Tudor! What can I say? I can say nothing of any weight, against the evidence of these letters, these cruel letters, for which I am not responsible! Yet!—yet! I declare before high Heaven! in the presence of the Lord who will be my judge—that no wrong has been done you—no wrong intended you, either by me or by—by—by any one else!" said Lilith, fearful of uttering the offensive name of Ancillon, and wringing her hands in the extremity of her distress.

"No wrong!" he exclaimed, trembling with suppressed rage. "No wrong in such letters as these, addressed by that man to you—to you?"

"No, no wrong," she persisted, though in a low, faint tone.

"And is that all you have to offer in justification? A bald, stupid, impudent denial of an evident fact? Nothing else?"

"Nothing else," she confessed, in a voice of despair.

"And you expect me to believe it?"

"No, I expect nothing, Tudor," she sighed.

"By my honor, you shall not call me by my name!" Do not dare to offend—to insult me in that way again. Where is that man now?" he suddenly burst forth.

"I do not know, sir," said Lilith, in a dying voice; adding, faintly, after a short pause: "You read in that last letter that he was at Frosthill yesterday morning, intending to go to Chicago. I know no more than that."

"He has been here, however, according to his own appointment?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"On Monday afternoon."

"And you received him?"

"Yes."

"How long did he stay?"

"Until ten o'clock."

"And you entertained him during all that time?"

"Yes."

"And yet—'No wrong has been done, no wrong intended?' " he exclaimed, in bitter sarcasm.

"No, no wrong whatever," said Lilith.

He sprang to his feet with a fierce exclamation.

"I tell you, wretched girl, that men have slain women for such wrongs as these!"

Lilith was shocked, but quickly controlled herself, though she cowered in the chair and shuddered with horror.

He was pacing excitedly up and down the floor.

Suddenly he stopped beside her.

She looked up with a wild, startled, appealing expression in her dark eyes.

"Be still!" he said. "You have nothing to fear from me! I regard the laws of God. I would not kill you, although you have dishonored me! I will not even bring you into court to expose your wickedness and my humiliation to the world—although these letters in my possession are sufficient to convict you and free me in any divorce court in Christendom! But—I shall not the less surely repudiate you, and forbid you to bear my name, or to speak of me as in any manner related to yourself, or to speak of my honored father. I shall forbid you to do this, under pain of the legal penalties I am able to inflict upon you."

Lilith had risen to her feet, and was looking at her husband, a strange change coming over the childlike face and form; as if by some magic transformation she was turning into a mature woman.

For a moment she rested one arm on the back of her chair, as if for support, while she looked up to his face and inquired, in a low, slow, distinct tone:

"Mr. Hereward, do you mean what you say?"

"Do I mean it? I mean every word that I have said, and much more than I care to say! How dare you stand there, looking at me in that insolent way? Do you wish to madden me? Go! Leave my sight! Leave the room while I have some remnant of self-command left. And do not venture into my view again. In a few hours I shall have left my father's house behind me, never to return while you desecrate it with your presence!"

What a transformation had come over the timid young face and form! Was this Lilith, the shrinking child-wife, who but a little while ago cowered, trembling like a most guilty culprit under the cruel charges and fierce wrath of her husband? Was this the same Lilith who now came and stood before him, pale, but firm and self-possessed, as she spoke in a clear, calm voice:

"No, Mr. Hereward, I cannot turn you out of your father's house. It is I who must leave it."

"Do not stand there and look at me. Do not speak to me. Do not tempt me. Go! go!" he exclaimed, scarcely knowing what he said.

"Farewell!" she said, and turning, left the room.

Hours passed.

The negroes in the kitchen, who had seen the arrival of Mr. Hereward, and were expecting a summons to the parlor to receive orders from their mistress, waited long in vain. Twice Steve had gone to the parlor door, twice he found it locked, and had retired discreetly, without rapping.

Twice Nancy had been startled by a shriek from her mistress. The first time she had understood it as a cry of surprise at the sudden appearance of Mr. Hereward, who had surprised them all, in point of fact. The second time she had hurried to the parlor, but

still finding it locked, and hearing her master's voice in stern tones, she had withdrawn, saying to herself:

"He's telling ob her some dreffu! fing as has happen' —maybe dat railway acciden', as mought 'a' been more sarous dan was 'ported by Steve."

The dinner hour came on, and the table was set in the dining-room for two, and still there came no sign of a summons from the parlor.

Dinner was placed on the table and the bell rung, but without effect.

Then Steve was told to go to the parlor door, and tell the master and mistress that dinner was on the table.

Steve went and rapped.

"Well?" said the master from within.

"Dinner, is waitin', sah."

"I do not want any. Don't interrupt me again."

Steve went and reported to Nancy.

"De young marster and mist'ess is been habbin' ob a breeze, sure's yer born. Somefin wrong twix' dem two. Wot did de young mist'ess say? Didn' she want no dinner neider?"

"I reckon not, A'n' Nancy, 'caze she nebber said nuffin."

"Well, bes' way is to let 'em alone till deir appetite comes to 'em. It will be sure to come 'fo' long," said the woman.

Dinner grew cold on the table, and still there was no movement from the parlor.

Night fell. Supper was served. The bell was rung. But no one came out from the parlor.

"I'll go see wot's de matter now," said Nancy.

And, with the freedom of the oldest and most favored servant in the house, she went to the parlor door, opened it, and entered the room.

The place was cold and dark. The fire had gone out, and no lamp had been lighted. She could not see if

there was any one there. Something about the place seemed to strike a chill to her spirit as well as to her flesh. She called out:

"Miss Lilif!—Marse Tudor."

There was no response.

She shivered.

" 'Deed, de place is like de desolation ob 'bomination, as de Second Adwenturers say. Here, Steve, fetch a light!" she called down the dark passage.

The man speedily appeared with a tallow candle in his hand.

They entered the parlor together, but found no one there.

"Dey ain't in de long drawin'-room, 'caze dere ain't been no fire in dere for weeks an' weeks. Maybe dey is up in Miss Lilif's room. I'll go up dere an' see."

And up Nancy went, followed by Steve with the candle.

The fire was low in Lilith's chamber, but no sign of master or mistress was there.

They went through all the upper rooms without finding the young pair.

"Sich goin's on! I calls it flyin', I do, indeed—flyin'!" grumbled Nancy, coming downstairs from her fruitless errand.

"It's jes' like 'playin' hide-an'-whoop,' ain't it, A'n' Nancy?" said Steve.

"Whey in dis worl' can dey be? Sure dey ain't gone out to take a walk on sich a bitter, bitter cole night as dis? An' dey ain't in de house, certain," said Nancy, after she had gone through the whole building in her vain search.

"It is 'sterious, ain't it, Nancy?" said Steve.

" 'Sterious?' 'Sterious doan begin to 'scribe it. I feels like I was in a bad dream, a awful bad dream. Come now, Steve, shet de dinin'-room shetters; it's

gettin' cole as Canady," said the woman, as the two paused near the door.

The dining-room, as we have said before, was in the rear of Lilith's little parlor. Its windows looked out upon the grounds behind the house.

Steve went to close the shutters, but started back with a cry.

"Wot's de matter wid de fool now?" demanded Nancy. "Has yer seen a ghost?"

" 'Deed, Lor' knows, A'n' Nancy! I fought fus' it was a ghost. But it on'y Marse Tudor comin' up f'om de crik an' lookin' as w'ite as a sheet," replied the boy, recovering himself.

"Marse Tudor?"

"Yes, A'n' Nancy."

"Comin' up f'om de crik?"

"Yes, A'n' Nancy."

"Marse Tudor comin' up f'om de crik dis time o' night?"

"Yes, I tell yer, A'n' Nancy. Ef yer doan believe me come an' see for yerse'f," said Steve, making way for the woman to look out from the window.

Yes, there he was. Nancy could not deny it. Tudor Hereward, advancing from the direction of the creek, with his face looking ghastly pale in the full moonlight.

A few minutes later he entered the house.

"Has yer seen anyfing ob Miss Lilif, sah?" inquired Nancy, going to meet him.

"No! Is she not in her room?" demanded the master, in ill-concealed agitation.

"She is not in de house, sah, dat is certain," said Nancy, becoming vaguely alarmed.

"Have you looked for her?"

"Ebbery hole an' corner, young marse. An' w'ich dere ain't no oak-chists, nor mistletoe boughs, nor baron's halls for her to get trapped into neider," re-

plied Nancy, with a shudder at the recollections of the ghastly song.

Tudor Hereward changed color.

"Give me that candle, Stephen," he said, "and go back to the kitchen, both of you. I will ring if I need you."

And he took the light from Stephen's hand to search the house himself.

He went upstairs to begin the search in Lilith's own room.

And there he found that he need search no further. His eyes fell upon something that had escaped the notice of the two negro servants.

CHAPTER XXXV

GONE

It was a letter, pinned to the pin-cushion on the dressing bureau.

He snatched it up, went and locked the door to secure himself from intrusion, and then returned and stood by the chimney corner to read the letter by the light of the lamp on the mantel-piece.

On the inside it was without date or address, and read as if it had been poured out from the writer's heart and brain at a white heat. It began somewhat abruptly, as follows:

"You have sent me away from you. You have told me that in a few hours you will leave this, your patrimonial home, never to return to it while I 'desecrate it' with my presence. But you need not abandon your father's house on my account, Tudor. You have told me to leave you. And I obey you, as I have always

obeyed you. While you are reading this letter I shall be speeding away.

"You have said that you never loved me—that you only married me to please your dying father.

"Oh, Tudor, from my childhood up, I had been taught to love and honor you, and this love and honor grew and strengthened into an adoration and worship second only to that I owe and give to the Heavenly Father. I never thought myself worthy to be your wife. When you asked me to become your wife, I consented in obedience to your father's wishes and to what I supposed to be your own—I consented gladly—wondering at the honor and happiness offered me.

"I never questioned that you loved me, I never even thought to question it. I loved and trusted you, and you had asked me for myself. That was enough for me.

"But, oh, Tudor! If I had not loved and honored you next to our Heavenly Lord, and had not taken it on trust that you loved me, I never would have consented to be your wife; I never would have been a party to that sacrilege committed beside the death-bed of your father—no, not even to have pleased that beloved and dying father. But it was done—done in the innocence of ignorance by me.

"Since our marriage I have tried to serve you and please you. Only the Lord knows with what zeal and delight I tried to make myself agreeable and acceptable to you. But it was all wasted worship, because you did not love me.

"And, Mr. Hereward, I am at this moment suffering some self-scorn for such man-worship.

"Now, as to this last unspeakable charge that you have made against me. If it were possible that it should be true, it should separate us forever and ever. And as it is not true, it must separate us until you yourself shall discover its falsity, realize the depth of

the wrong you have done me, and come to me—not with an apology—that I do not want—but with a full and complete retraction.

"Oh, Tudor! After all your father's life-long knowledge and love of his adopted child; after all our old neighbors' esteem and affection for me, from my childhood up; after all that you have seen and known of me; after all our close communion of heart and mind, how could you think such deadly evil even possible for me? Surely if it had been, some sign of it would have shown even in my childhood, for even children show some indications of character. And when did you ever hear of me, from your father's friends or neighbors who have known me intimately from infancy, any sign of falsehood, treachery, insincerity, or any other form of immorality?

"And yet in the face of my well-known spotless and blameless record, you charge me with unutterable evil upon the mere accidents of circumstantial evidence and outward appearances!

"Oh, Tudor! My faith in you was stronger than that! If over your head had lowered a cloud of circumstantial evidence, heavy and dark enough to blacken your reputation in the eyes of all the world, yet would not I have believed any evil of you! One word of yours would have been stronger than all that evidence. And yet I would not have wronged you by requiring even that one word to be spoken! I could not have thought any evil of you! No, nor do I even now, when you have wronged and banished me!—although I cannot now worship you as I have done; cannot even think of you as I once did; cannot ascribe to you the wisdom and goodness I once believed you to possess. For, Tudor, if you had been as wise and good as I once supposed you to be, you could never have married me without love; never have misunder-

stood my nature; never have condemned me upon circumstantial evidence.

"You would have seen me and known truth through all the cloud of mystery that enveloped me.

"I am your true wife, holding your authority over me second only to the Lord's. But, Tudor, I am no 'Griselda' to lay myself beneath your feet and suffer you, in trampling upon me, to tread justice and humanity into the dust.

"Although you say you never loved me, yet you made me your own; and because you made me your own—your own most intimate own—your second self—I must speak to you as yourself to yourself.

"I go now because you have sent me away; I shall never throw myself in your way, neither shall I try to conceal myself from you. But I go, never to return until you yourself discover your wrong, retract your charge, and with perfect love and trust seek me out and ask me to come to you. Then I will return to be all that I have been to you up to this day when your insane act drives me away. LILITH."

Tudor Hereward read this letter with such a conflict of feeling that on finishing he tore it to shreds and threw it into the fire, where it was burned to ashes.

The next instant he regretted his hasty act. And the time was destined to come when he would bitterly lament the destruction of that letter; when he would have given his whole fortune for its recovery, had that been possible.

He threw himself into the arm-chair before the fire, where he sat in deeply troubled thought.

It was a bitterly cold night, as the weather-wise negroes had predicted that it would be. The wind was blowing a gale from the northwest. Every sheet and stream of water would be hard frozen before the morning. Where was Lilith to-night? he asked himself,

conscience-stricken, although he still believed her to be false, or rather tried to persuade himself that he had full cause to do so.

"I did not drive the child from the house! I should not have dreamed of doing such a thing on such a night as this! I only ordered her from my presence! Now where has she gone on this freezing night? To the railway station, no doubt, first of all, to take the train east. And to do this she must have ordered a carriage. She tried to catch the eight o'clock train, perhaps. If she succeeded she is off. If she missed it she is still at the station waiting for the next train —the midnight train—and I may yet overtake her and stop her."

With this thought uppermost in his mind, Tudor Hereward went downstairs to the cold and comfortless parlor, and rang the bell.

Nancy and Stephen both answered it, anxiety depicted on every feature of their faces.

"I have a note from your mistress. She has gone to make a visit. Stephen, go down to the stable and ask Peter, or any of the grooms you may find there, what carriage and horses she ordered. I hope a closed carriage and safe horses, on such a night as this," said Mr. Hereward.

Stephen, much wondering at the aspect of affairs, went on his errand.

Nancy, after standing in silence for a few moments, broke out with:

"Now, wot in de name o' sense made Miss Lilif start out dis cole night to make a wisit?"

As Mr. Hereward made no reply, Nancy started off on another tack:

"Marse Tudor, yer nebber eat no dinner, an' now de supper's gettin' spoil'. Won't yer come in an' eat supper?"

"Presently," curtly responded the master.

Stephen returned.

"Well?" anxiously demanded Mr. Hereward.

"Well, sah, de young mist'ess hasn't ordered no carriage, nor likewise hosses, f'om de stables. De young mist'ess hasn't sent no orders to de stables wotsom'debber," said the man.

"Is that true?" demanded Mr. Hereward, in surprise and disturbance.

"True as Gospel, young marster, as yer mought prove by 'quirin' fo' yerse'f," said Stephen.

Mr. Hereward, somewhat to the surprise of his servants, chose to inquire for himself.

Hastily drawing on his ulster, and slipping the hood over his head, he went out and bent his steps to the stables, facing the fierce northwest wind as he went.

At the stables he found Peter and Len, two of the grooms who lived in the loft.

They corroborated the report of Stephen, and as a final proof, showed the three carriages and six horses that formed the establishment.

Lilith had not gone to the railway station, therefore she must be near at hand; he would wait for the developments of the morning, he concluded.

He went into the dining-room and ate a little supper. Then he ordered Stephen to shut up the house, and he went upstairs and went to bed, well worn out in body and mind; yet he could not sleep.

He passed the night sleeplessly and restlessly, and arose early from his wearisome bed. He dressed himself in anxious haste, and went down to the parlor where a good fire was burning.

He rang the bell.

Stephen answered it.

"Tell your mistress that I would like to see her," he said, speaking on speculation.

"Yes, sah."

The man left the room, and in a few minutes Nancy entered.

"I s'pose yer knows, young marster, as we ain't seen nuffin ob de young mist'ess since yes'day?" said the woman anxiously.

"Yes; and now, Nancy, tell me where do you suppose she could have gone?" inquired the young man, confidently, for Nancy had been his nurse, and he knew that he could trust in her discretion.

"It has jes' come in my head whey she's gone, maybe."

"Where, then?" anxiously demanded Mr. Hereward.

"Well, young marse, yer know dat ole auntie wot libs by herse'f just 'cross de crik back ob de house?"

"Yes, yes. What has she to do with the matter?"

"Heap mo'n yer fink, marse, maybe. Dat ole 'oman been laid up long ob de rheumatiz; so yes'day mornin' 'fo' yer come home, she sent a young w'ite gal here beggin', an' de young mist'ess gib her a bundle of ole close an' a basket ob 'visions, an' sent me long home to help carry de fings."

"Well, but what has this to do with your mistress' disappearance?"

"I gwine tell yer, marster. De young mist'ess, she seemed mighty consarned about dat young gal, an' couldn' get her offen her mine like; so I jes' finks as de young mist'ess mought 'a' put on her cloak an' gone to see dat young gal an' sick ole 'oman."

"I will go over there at once," exclaimed Mr. Hereward, rising. "But why has she not returned if she went there?"

"Oh, marse, she might hab foun' dat anshun ole 'oman mighty bad, an' yer know how ten'er-hearted Miss Lilif is. Ah, dere ain't many like her is. An' so she mought 'a' stayed long ob her."

"And not sent word where she was, to prevent anxiety here? Nonsense, Nancy."

"She mought hab sent word, an' de messenger nebber come. Yer know how chillun is."

Hereward had by this time belted on his ulster, and now he took his cap and left the room, to go on his errand. He did not believe that Lilith was at the creek hut, yet he went thither, hoping against despair.

He crossed the rustic bridge, which was nothing better than a broad, heavy plank, without defence on either side. Very slippery and unsafe was that plank now, covered as it was with frozen snow as smooth as glass, and sloping down to each edge, from which hung a fringe of icicles.

But Hereward was so sure-footed that he passed over safely, and followed the narrow path that led deep into the tangled thicket where the little log hut stood.

Hereward knocked at the door.

A weak and querulous voice bade the visitor—

"Come in."

He entered the hut, which consisted of but one medium-sized room, lighted by one small window.

On the left-hand side stood a miserable bed, covered with heaps of old clothes—old gowns, coats, skirts, and so forth—all past wear. Huddled under these lay the rheumatic old negro woman.

Hereward's heart, notwithstanding his anxiety, was struck with pity.

"Why, auntie," he said, standing by the squalid bed, "I am really sorry to see you in this condition."

"Ah, Marse Tudor, how good it was in yer to come, young marse! An' de fire gone out, an' I hab not had nuffin to eat since las' night," continued the old woman.

"Has not Mrs. Hereward been here to look after you?" inquired the visitor.

"W'ich? De young mist'ess? Lor' now, marse, who'd speck that deliky young lady to come to sich a

po' place as dis, in sich wedder, too? No, she ain't been yere, young marse; but she sent me wittals an' close, plenty ob 'em; but little good dey do to me now w'en I can't turn in bed, an' got nobody to han' me nuffin."

"Where is the girl who was staying with you?" inquired Mr. Hereward, who while they had been talking had not been idle, but had been gathering together scattered straw, sticks, pine cones, and other rustic kindlings which littered the hut, and had piled them into the cold fireplace, up which, at a stroke from the match he drew from his pocket-case, they blazed brightly.

"Oh, marse, dat do look so good an' feel so comfo'ble," said the old woman, rubbing her hands. "An' dat young gal wot yer ax me 'bout, she's gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes, marse, gone an' lef' me 'lone arter I had shelter' her so many weeks!"

"How came she to leave you in this condition?"

"Her husban' come arter her an' took her 'way! Yes, marse, he wot had 'glected her all de time w'en we was so po', come an' pounce down on top ob us, 'jes w'en we had a plenty to eat an' drink, an' was a-j'yin' oursef's wid all de good tea an' bread an' meat as de young mist'ess had sent, he come in, so he did, an' eat up all our f'ied ham an' eggs an' w'ite rolls an' cold chicken, an' drank up ebery drop ob wine in de bottle, an' put de flask ob b'andy in his pocket. An' den he ax de young gal wot else de young mist'ess had gib her, an' she told him 'bout de money an' fings. An' den he said he was goin' way dat same night an' she mus' get ready to go 'long ob him. An' so dey pack up an' went an' tuk ebery bressed fing along wid 'em! Ebery bressed fing as de young mist'ess had sent for bofe of us, dey took 'way an' lef' me yere 'lone

by myse'f. But I doan blame her, po' dear gal! She had to do wot he said."

"Who was the fellow? Do you know his name?"

"Yer mean dat young 'oman's husban'?"

"Yes, I mean him. What was the ruffian's name? I will have him arrested for robbery."

"Now wot was his name, ag'in? I have heerd it often enuff, an' it was a funny name too. Lemmy see—Answer—somefin or oder! Answer—Answer-much—Answer-loud—Answer-long! Dat was it, marster! Answerlong!"

"Ancillon!" exclaimed Hereward, in surprise.

"Yes, marster, dat was it! A Mister—Alfud—Answer-long—an awful big rogue too."

"I have no doubt of it! Well, my poor woman, I will hurry home and send Nancy and Stephen here with all that you require to make you comfortable; and one of the younger girls shall come and stay with you until you get better," said Hereward, as he arose to go.

"Young marse, I's 'shame' to ax yer, but would yer min' lookin' in de cupboard dere to see if yer kin fine any little crumb or crust ob bread fo' me to nibble on w'ile I'm waitin' fo' de fings yer's gwine to sen' me by Nancy? 'Deed I's 'shame' to bodder yer 'bout it, young marse; but I feels awful bad t'rough not eatin' nuffin."

Before she had got half through her speech, Hereward had gone to the corner cupboard and fished out from its litter not only a part of a cold roll, but a shred of cold ham, which he brought to the woman, together with a tin can of water, to procure which he had to break through a thick crust of ice that had frozen over it in the pail.

All his thoughts were thrown into confusion by what he had just heard of Ancillon. He was clear on but one point—he should get out a warrant for the arrest of the man on the charge of having robbed the

old sick woman of the money and goods that had been sent for her relief.

As soon as he reached home, Nancy came with an anxious face to meet him at the back door, by which he entered the house.

Anticipating her questions, he said:

"Your mistress has not been at the creek hut."

"Now w'ere de name ob de Lor' can dat young creetur be?" groaned the woman.

"She probably walked out to visit some neighbor, and has been detained by the very cold weather," replied Hereward, trying to persuade himself to believe in his own improbable theory.

"You must take Stephen—No, by the way, I shall want Stephen. You had better take Peter and the handcart, filled with everything most needful, and go to the hut. Also, take with you one of the younger girls to leave with the sick woman until she gets better. I must put the case entirely in your hands, Nancy, as I shall go to the village immediately. As you go out send me in a cup of coffee, and tell Stephen to put the gray horse to the buggy, and have it at the door as soon as possible," said Mr. Hereward.

Nancy left the parlor, full of wonder and distress on account of the disappearance of her young mistress, and at the very inadequate anxiety of her master.

" 'Pears to me he ought to be almos' c'azy 'bout de young mist'ess, but he ain't! He's on'y a little sort ob oneasy, an' dat is all. W'en a body would fink as he'd be ready to go ravin' mad! An' she not been seen since yes'day arternoon!"

Hereward was not nearly so indifferent as Nancy had supposed him to be. Since Lilith's disappearance he had made a discovery—that he loved her more than he had known. Since reading her letter he had

made another discovery—that he doubted her less and respected her more than he had known.

And now he was deeply troubled on more than one account. He was most anxious for the safety of Lilith—a child who knew nothing of the world, and yet had thrown herself unprotected and unadvised upon the world. Then he was most anxious, also, for the respect of his neighbors. He could not bear to think that one iota of that respect should be forfeited through any means, least of all through anything connected with his domestic life.

But now her own act had upset all his plans, and not only his plans, but his opinions also; for he could not divest himself of the conviction that she had behaved with the forbearance, self-respect and dignity that might have become a dethroned queen. He could not do otherwise than recant all his base, injurious thoughts of her; he could not but honor her.

In the meantime, however, where was she? And how could he ever answer the questions of her friends, his own old neighbors, when they should inquire, "Where is she?" How, also, would this mysterious disappearance of his wife affect the question of his re-election? For the ambitious young statesman thought even of that.

Yet it is only fair to say that the question of Lilith's safety was the one that gave him the most anxiety.

In the midst of his disturbed thoughts one of the housemaids brought him the cup of coffee he had ordered, and also the announcement that the buggy was at the door.

He drank the coffee hastily, entered the buggy, and drove off to Frosthill.

Then, by covert questionings, he tried to discover whether any one had seen Mrs. Hereward. But he gained no tidings of her.

He laid a complaint against one Alfred Ancillon

before the justice of the peace, and got out a warrant for his arrest.

Then he went home.

But days passed without news of Lilith, or of the man whom the constables were hunting.

At length, at the end of a week of fruitless waiting, watching, and hunting, Tudor Hereward returned to Washington City.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A TERRIBLE DISCOVERY

Tudor Hereward arrived at the capital in a very unenviable state of mind. He felt that he had driven his young wife from her home, as surely, as inevitably, as if he had taken her by the shoulders and thrust her out of doors, and turned the key against her on that bitter March night when she disappeared from the neighborhood.

It is true that he had not expected her—timid child that he thought her—to take him so promptly at his word; he had only meant to reproach her, to punish her, and humiliate her by making her feel what he thought of the baseness of her conduct; but he had meant to leave her, the next morning, in peaceable possession of the Cliffs, until after the adjournment of Congress, when he would have leisure to attend to her case, to put her away quietly and provide for her.

The letter she had addressed to him had forestalled all fear that she had, in country parlance, "made 'way with herself." That letter had also shaken down to the dust all his doubts of Lilith's integrity. The mystery of her acquaintance with Ancillon still remained, but as a mystery only, not as an evidence of evil. All his wrath now was turned upon Ancillon, who he

believed had won his wife's compassion by some false story, concerning which he had bound her to secrecy. He might have represented himself to her as her uncle, or even as her brother. How could she know any better, who had never known her parents except by hear-say, or her parents' family even by report? So now reasoned Tudor Hereward on the theme of Alfred Ancillon.

Other memories also, which should have been present with him and considered in the hour of his mad passion, now came too late in the shape of sober second thoughts. They had been suggested not only by his experience of her, but by her letter.

When had he ever heard a single word in his own family, or out of it, against her conduct?

His late father, too, who had brought Lilith up from babyhood, and who so loved and esteemed her that he wished her, above all other women, to become the wife of his beloved and only son—was no such fool as to be deceived in her character and disposition.

His old neighbors, too, who had known Lilith intimately from her childhood, and who, because she was humbly born—an interloper in their old county circles —would have been sure to detect flaws in her nature, had there been flaws to detect, could find no fault in her at all.

And yet he, her husband, who should have known her better than all others, could, in his jealous passion, forget all her blameless life, all her love and devotion to his late father, all her adoration of himself, all the consecration of her young heart and brain and hands to his constant, untiring service; and he could, upon merely circumstantial evidence, suspect, insult and discard her! And now she had taken him at his word and she had gone! The only right, proper and dignified course she could have taken. He admitted this.

But, poor, desolate child that she was, where could she have gone?

He could not even conjecture. Nor could he seek her or make inquiries about her, as people do for other missing ones; because to have done so would have made a neighborhood sensation that might have developed into a social scandal. And this he shrank from with all his soul. He had, therefore, conducted his search for Lilith upon the most secret and cautious principles.

With the same caution, and without ever mentioning his wife's departure, he investigated everywhere in the village and at the railway station; but without any success.

Finally, when he felt convinced that she was nowhere in the neighborhood, and suspected that she had contrived to reach the railway station and get on the cars without being recognized, he had given up the search in that neighborhood and determined to return to Washington and pursue his search there.

He had cautioned his servants, upon the pain of his severest anger, not to talk of their mistress in any manner, adding that he hoped to find her in Washington. And he had left them full of sorrow and dismay.

On his arrival in the city his first care was to engage the exclusive service of a private detective.

Having thus put the case in the best and most discreet hands, he applied himself to his official work with what heart he could.

To all inquiries after his wife he would answer that her health had not improved, but that he hoped it would do so. And thus he tried to ward off suspicion that anything else but health was out of order.

He hoped and prayed to get some trace of her and bring her back before the fact of her departure from him should become the property of gossips and the scandal-mongers, political as well as social, as it cer-

tainly would do in Lilith's prolonged absence, and as certainly be made a terrible weapon for his downfall and humiliation in the next election.

But days followed days and no news of Lilith came to comfort him. All the efforts of the skilled detective failed to find a single trace of her.

He also hit upon another plan. He put in the personal advertising column of all the leading papers a cautiously worded advertisement inviting the exile to return.

But week followed week, and no response came.

At last he began to fear that some fatal evil had befallen Lilith; not that she herself had been driven to any desperate deed—he had too much faith in her religion to believe her capable of such a sin—but he feared that through her very innocence and inexperience she might have "fallen among thieves," and might have been brought to destruction.

He was still in this state of mind when about the middle of April, as he was one morning leaving his hotel to go to the House, a telegram was put in his hands. That was in itself nothing very unusual.

So he opened this one quite coolly as he stood near the office counter.

But his cheek grew ashen and his lips were compressed as he read the following dispatch from the rector of St. Mark's:

"FROSTHILL, April 15th, 18—.

"TO THE HON. TUDOR HEREWARD, WASHINGTON CITY: Come at once to Cloud Cliffs. A terrible discovery has been made. "CLEMENT CAVE."

For one instant he stood panic-stricken; then glanced quickly at the office clock, saw that he had just ten minutes to secure the next train, started at

once for the avenue, signaled a hackman, jumped into the hack, and said :

"Double fare if you catch the express!"

The man started his horses at a brisk rate, and reached the depot as soon as possible.

Hereward sprang out of the hack, thrust the promised reward into the driver's hand, rushed through the gate, and jumped on the train just as it was leaving the depot.

Not until he was in his seat did Hereward recover his breath or his self-possession.

Then he took the telegram and read it again:

"Come at once to Cloud Cliffs. A terrible discovery has been made."

What had happened? Why could not the writer of that telegram have spoken out plainly?

"A terrible discovery."

It concerned his missing wife. Of that alone he felt assured. But in what way did it concern her?

Why could not the rector have told him exactly what had happened?

Then, with the suddenness of a sword-thrust, the truth struck Hereward that Mr. Cave had written thus vaguely though alarmingly to prepare him for the shock of some calamity too great to be conveyed by telegram—something worse than death, if worse could happen to him or to his!

Tortured and oppressed by these poignant and gloomy thoughts, Tudor Hereward spent the hours on the train that was rushing him rapidly towards his home.

It was just five o'clock when the train stopped at Frosthill.

Hereward sprang out at once and looked anxiously around.

There was but one carriage on the stand, and that was the rockaway from the Cliffs, with Stephen on the box. It drew up to the platform, and the Rev. Mr. Cave alighted from it, and with a pale and distressed countenance advanced to meet Hereward, who breathlessly demanded:

"What has happened? Speak out, in Heaven's name!"

"Hush! Collect yourself. Be firm. I will tell you when we get away from here," said the rector, as he took a firm hold of the young man's arm and urged him into the carriage.

The next instant they were seated side by side and rolling away towards Cloud Cliffs.

"Is it about Lilith?" exclaimed Hereward, as soon as they were in their places.

"Yes, it is about your wife," gravely responded the rector.

"But what—what about Lilith? What has happened to her?"

"When did you see your wife last, Hereward?" evasively inquired Mr. Cave.

"Weeks ago! That is not the question. Lilith! Is she—LIVING? Tell me—THAT!" came like a cry from the tortured heart.

The rector took hold of his shaking hand, and speaking tenderly and solemnly, answered.

"Not in this world, my poor friend; but living, we trust, in a better one."

"Lilith—dead!—Lilith—DEAD!" cried the young man, with an anguish in tone and look that the Christian minister could not endure to behold.

"Dead to this world, Hereward, but alive to a better one," compassionately answered the rector.

Hereward sank back in his seat with a groan that

seemed to rend his bosom. He asked no more questions then.

Lilith was dead!

The innocent child-wife who had been the tender, faithful, devoted daughter to his father, the loving, worshiping, ministering wife to him, whom he had driven from his home, into the pitiless world, had come to her death, as it was indeed most likely that she should.

The Lord had taken home the child that he had cast out.

Lilith was dead!

That was all; and in that was the sum of agony complete.

The rector sat holding the hand of the stricken man in silent sympathy, venturing no word of consolation, because just then and there such words would have been worse than useless.

Minutes passed before Hereward spoke again. Then, in a broken voice, he asked:

"Where?—when?—how did she die?"

"Will you not trust my friendship—my discretion—when I counsel you not to talk more of this misfortune just at present?" gently inquired the rector.

"But—I must know. And—after hearing that—Lilith is dead—I can bear anything else under the sun. Tell me all!" said the miserable husband, persistently. "How did my child die?"

"We think it was an accident," gravely replied the rector.

"Accident!" echoed the young man, with an appalled look. "Then it was sudden—violent? Oh, Lilith!"

"It was sudden, but not violent," said the rector, gently taking the hand of the heavily stricken man. "It was an easy, painless passage to the better world. Oh, Hereward! my dear friend, bear up!"

But the remorseful husband had dropped his head in his open hands, and his sobs shook his whole frame.

CHAPTER XXXVII

AT PEACE

The rector, feeling the most painful sympathy with the husband's agony of grief, yet conscious how utterly helpless he himself was to mitigate that agony, and how much worse than vain, how impertinent, all words of attempted consolation must seem, sat by his friend, holding his hand in silence.

"What was the manner of her death?" at length inquired Hereward, in a very low voice of enforced steadiness.

"It was quick and pitiless. She was drowned," tenderly and solemnly replied the rector.

" 'Drowned!' 'Drowned!' Lilith 'drowned!' " groaned the young man, in a tone of deepest anguish, shuddering through his whole frame.

"Oh, Hereward, Hereward! would to Heaven I could say or do aught to help or comfort you! No mortal can do that. There is but One who can both strengthen and console. Call on Him, dear friend."

"How—did—this—happen?" inquired the young husband, in a broken voice.

"Can you bear to hear the details?" gravely questioned Dr. Cave.

"Yes! I have borne to hear that she is dead—that she was drowned—I can bear to hear anything after that. Tell me all—everything," replied Hereward.

"Then we have reason to believe that on the last afternoon when she was alive she went out alone to

visit a sick negro woman who lives in a hut in the thicket on the other side of the creek—"

"Yes, yes! I know! Go on!"

"It was growing very cold; the creek was covered with a thin layer of ice, and the narrow plank bridge was sheathed in ice, and its sides are undefended."

"Yes, yes, yes! Go on!"

"It seems that in crossing she must have slipped and fallen off the bridge, and through the ice."

"Oh, Lilith! Lilith!" wailed Hereward.

The rector took his hand and pressed it with deep emotion.

"Go on," said the young man.

"Before the next morning the creek was frozen to the bottom. Before the next night it was covered with a deep fall of snow."

"I know! I know!"

"Therefore, you understand, the mortal remains of our beloved one were concealed from view."

"But in the thaw and freshet—"

"In the great freshet, when every mountain spring became a cascade, and the creek became a torrent, it seems that the force of the current carried the body down into a ravine in the lowest, densest part of the thicket, half a mile below the rustic bridge, to a spot where it lay hidden until this morning, when it was accidentally discovered by young Hilary."

"Why do you stop? Do not spare me. Go on. Tell me all. How did he happen to find it?"

"Young Hilary was out with his gun and dogs, after birds, early this morning. They started a covey in that very thicket—and—that led to the discovery. Do not ask me for details here, my friend. I cannot give them. Hilary did not recognize the body; but he summoned the nearest assistance at hand and had the remains taken to Cloud Cliffs, which was the nearest house, and the coroner was sent for."

"Who first recognized the body?"

"The servants at Cloud Cliffs; and they only by the hair, shoes and clothing. Then they sent for me, as a friend of the family, and I telegraphed for you before going to the Cliffs."

"Did—you—see it?" moaned Hereward, in an almost inaudible voice.

"Yes," replied the rector, in a low tone.

"And did you—recognize her?"

"Yes—positively. I could have sworn that it was the body of our dear one—from the beautiful hair, and the general appearance. But let us not talk about this, dear Hereward. You must brace yourself to meet a severe trial. We are drawing near the Cliffs, you know, where the coroner's inquest is sitting. You will be expected to appear before it to answer any questions that they may put to you. And I would have you firm and self-possessed, as I have always known you to be on trying occasions," said Mr. Cave, earnestly.

"But this—this! Ah, Heaven! how shall I meet this?"

They were turning into the drive that led to the house as Hereward said this, burying his face in his hands.

A crowd, such as is always attracted by a sensational tragedy in real life, had collected around the house. They filled the piazza and all the ground for an acre about the premises.

"There are about ten times as many people on the spot as there were when I left the house this morning," muttered the rector to himself, as he gazed upon the assembled multitude.

"I should scarcely have thought that there were so many people in the county," said Hereward, as he looked up at the words of his companion.

"Geet out'n de way, can't yer? Cornfoun' yer! Does

yer want to be druv over and killed? Sarve yer right ef yer was," grumbled Stephen on the box, as he drove his horses slowly and half rearing through the crowd that blocked the avenue, but that stumbled and floundered away to the right and left to make room for the carriage to pass.

Stephen drew up his horses before the principal entrance, in the midst of a throng of people.

Mr. Cave got out first, and then gave his hand to assist Hereward, who walked like an old man as they ascended the stairs and passed through the crowded piazza into the crowded hall.

"Will you go up to your room and rest, Hereward, before you go to the inquest?" kindly inquired Mr. Cave.

"No, no, I will not spare myself. I will go before the coroner at once. Where is the inquest held?"

"In the long drawing-room, which, being the most spacious apartment in the house, was thought to be the most convenient for the purpose."

"Come, then, I will go at once," repeated Hereward.

A bailiff stood at the door to keep back the pressure of the crowd; but he made way for the rector and the stricken master of the house.

The room was full, but not crowded, because it was not permitted to be so.

Dr. Kerr, who stood apparently on the watch for Hereward's entrance, came towards him, and with a silent pressure of the hand conducted him and his companion to the upper end of the room to seats which had been kept for them.

Hereward sank into one of these seats. The rector placed himself on the right side and the doctor on the left of their unhappy friend.

The centre of the room was occupied by two tables, one long one, placed lengthwise, and covered with a green cloth, at the head of which sat the coroner, and

at the sides the jury, six on the right and six on the left.

The other table was placed crosswise at the foot of the long table, and was draped with white from top to floor. Something lay on this table covered with a white sheet. It was easy to know what was concealed. A strong odor of chloride of lime pervaded the air.

At this moment the coroner and jury were listening to the deposition of a man with a mumbling voice, who was telling how he helped to lift the body from the ravine in which it was wedged and to bring it to the house. He seemed to be awed or frightened half to death, and the tones of his voice scarcely filled a circle of three yards in circumference.

Hereward was duly sworn, and then the coroner said:

"Mr. Hereward, will you look upon the dead lying on that table before you, and tell the jury if you recognize it?"

Dr. Kerr took the young man's arm and led him to the table, saying gently:

"Tudor, do not look on the face. It is utterly unrecognizable, my friend."

And then, as the officer in attendance took off the white covering, revealing the form in its black robes, the doctor deftly covered the face with a linen handkerchief that he held in his hand.

Hereward gave one agonized glance, and turned his head with a groan that seemed to rend his bosom.

Dr. Kerr led him away from the spot, and the coroner put the question:

"Do you recognize the body as that of any one you have known?"

"Yes," responded Hereward, in a low and broken voice. "It is that of Lilith, my wife."

He was allowed a few moments in which to recover himself, and then the coroner said:

"Mr. Hereward, will you tell the jury when and where you last saw the deceased alive?"

Tudor hesitated, collected himself and answered:

"On the afternoon of the twentieth of March last, in our parlor on the opposite side of the entrance hall. She left me to go to her room. I have not seen her since."

"When did you first know that she was missing?"

"At our usual tea hour, when it was discovered that she was not in the house."

"Was search made for her at the time?"

"Yes, very diligent search, both in the house and about the grounds that night, and throughout the neighborhood in the days that followed."

"And when was the search abandoned?"

"It has never been abandoned, although it has been conducted with discretion, to avoid useless publicity as far as was consistent with its object."

"Did you know of the deceased's intention to cross the creek to visit the sick woman that night?"

"No. I knew nothing of such an intention on her part."

"That will do, Mr. Hereward. It has really pained us all, I am sure, to put you through this distressing ordeal. You may retire now."

"Come out, Hereward. Do not linger here," said Dr. Kerr, taking the arm of the young man, and leading him through the crowd out of the room and into the little parlor on the opposite side of the hall.

Here also they were soon joined by the rector and a bailiff, who came to call the doctor in to give evidence upon some point that had been raised.

When the Rev. Mr. Cave was left alone with Hereward he drew a chair to his side, seated himself, and took the hand of the young man in his own, saying, with tender gravity:

"Tudor, will you confide in the old friend who has

lived among you and ministered to your family for forty years; who married your parents; who was with them each in their dying hour; baptized your wife, and married you—will you confide in this old friend and take counsel with him?"

"It is what I most wish to do," breathed the younger man.

"Then tell me first, Tudor, dear boy, how it happened that she lay dead four weeks, during the whole of which time you had missed her, yet had given no sign of her absence to us, your neighbors here and your oldest friends?" Dr. Cave inquired, gently yet earnestly.

Hereward passed his hand once or twice across his troubled brow; but he did not reply promptly.

The rector continued:

"Your answers to the questions put to you before the coroner's inquest were clear and pointed enough. Yet it seems to me that other questions—had they occurred to the coroner—might have been put that must have drawn out answers which would have thrown a new light on this subject."

"Not on the cause or the manner of the death, which must have been just as circumstances and appearances indicate."

"You think so?"

"I have no doubt of it. It was in accordance with Lilith's character that after having heard of the sick woman across the creek, and even after having sent some relief to her by Nancy, and having received the report of the housekeeper, she should still have felt so much interested in the case as to have suddenly resolved to visit the patient in person. It was not late and the distance was short, and our child, as brave as she was tender-hearted, started out alone. And the light, careless step, and the icy crossing—did the rest!" said Hereward, with a half-suppressed sob.

"So persuaded were all the household their mistress had gone thither, that the cabin was the first place visited after the house had been fruitlessly searched. But she had not been there. So she must have fallen into the creek in going, not in returning. I crossed the creek twice, in going and in returning. It was frozen hard and covered by a new fall of snow. There was no sign to indicate that a catastrophe had occurred. No sign of what lay beneath the snow and ice. During the six days following her disappearance I made the most diligent search in this neighborhood that could have been made without giving publicity to the affair. I visited every house with which we were acquainted, knowing that I should discover, without asking, whether she had been seen by any of the inmates. Finally I felt convinced that Lilith had left the neighborhood, and I returned to Washington to resume my official duties, and also to put the case of my missing wife into the hands of a confidential detective. I was still privately pursuing the search, when your alarming telegram brought me back here."

"But—Tudor, dear friend, why should you have pursued your search privately? Why, when you discovered that your wife had disappeared from this neighborhood, did you not call in the assistance of friends and neighbors and the local authorities to assist you in the search?"

Tudor Hereward was silent for a few moments, and then he answered by asking another question.

"Would that course have done the least good under the circumstances which have this day come to light?"

"No, it would not; but still the question remains, my dear friend, why you did not call in your friends in your distress."

"First, then, because I had no reason to suppose that Lilith had met with any fatal accident."

"Not when she was so mysteriously missing?"

"No. And now I am about to relieve my mind by telling you what I thank Heaven that no question from the coroner or the jury obliged me to reveal at the inquest."

Hereward paused again to control his rising emotion, and then went on:

"When I discovered at length that my wife had certainly disappeared, I came to the strong conclusion that she had left me."

The Rev. Mr. Cave gazed at his parishioner as if he suspected that the young man's troubles had suddenly driven him mad!

"You came to the conclusion that your wife had left you! That Lilith had done such a deed as that!" he exclaimed, at length.

"Yes; and I had the strongest reasons for such a conviction," despondently replied Hereward.

"That Lilith—our Lilith, our tender, delicate, refined, devoted child—had left her husband!"

"Yes! yes! yes!" impatiently, despairingly, but persistently replied Hereward.

"For what cause, in the name of Heaven and earth?" demanded the rector.

"For a most just cause!—I drove her from me!"

"Tudor! Have you the least idea what you are saying?"

"Yes—I drove my wife away!"

"Heaven and earth, you are mad!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE THUNDERBOLT

The rector sat listening to Hereward's self-accusations in speechless amazement. At last he spoke, slowly and emphatically:

"In the course of my ministry of half a century I have seen many strange phases of human nature, but none so strange as this. It must indeed have been a most monstrous and unpardonable outrage that drove a timid, refined, and most religious child like Lilith to leave the sanctuary of her husband's house and throw herself upon the world!"

"It was all that! It was a cruel, monstrous, unpardonable outrage that drove her away!" groaned Hereward.

"And—there must have been madness in the man who committed this outrage."

"There was madness—frenzy!"

"And it must have been a fatal combination of deceptive circumstances that hurried a man of your judgment and self-control into such desperate passion."

"Again you are right. A set of circumstances so evil and even criminal in appearance, that they must have overwhelmed the self-poise of a man much wiser, better and stronger than myself. But I had better tell you all, from the beginning; for these domestic troubles really had their commencement in the very first week of our marriage."

"I have been so amazed by what you have already told me, Tudor, that there is scarcely any possible thing you could say that would surprise me now. Go on."

Then Hereward began from the time when he first left Lilith, on the day after Major Hereward's funeral, being the fifth day after their marriage at the deathbed of his father, and he told of his parting with his young wife that night, at the Frosthill depot; of his railway journey to Washington in the great snowstorm that followed; of his week's anxiety about Lilith; of the strange letter that he received from Alick informing him of the sojourn of a young strolling player at Cloud Cliffs; of his determination to

return and bring Lilith to Washington; of his railway journey home, and of the conversation he heard in the cars, reflecting on the conduct of Lilith and her most unfitting guest.

"But you never, from idle gossip, could have believed Lilith capable of levity or the least degree of impropriety!" interrupted the rector.

"No, not then. Certainly not then. But afterwards, as you shall hear, there were circumstances that might have convinced even you."

"Of what? Of Lilith's impropriety? Never! The child had grown up like a white flower just under my eye. I know her too well."

"Your faith does Lilith no more than justice; yet when you have heard the evidence you will not wonder that mine was shaken to its foundation."

"Let me hear it, then," said the rector incredulously.

And Hereward resumed his confession; told how he had taken Lilith to Washington with him; how bright, useful and helpful she had been, and how happy their married life was beginning to be, when the same strolling player appeared in Washington and, like the serpent in Eden, destroyed all their peace.

"Dear Tudor, was it not your morbid jealousy that destroyed your peace?" inquired the rector.

And Hereward told how he had brought Lilith down to Cloud Cliffs on Friday, the 16th ultimo; had returned to Washington on Saturday, the 17th, to attend a caucus; and how on Tuesday morning a missent letter had fallen into his hands, directed to his wife; how, acting upon a mutual understanding that each, in the absence of the other, should open all letters not marked "private," he had opened and read this one.

Here Hereward drew from his pocket that first fatal letter from Ancillon to Lilith, proposing to take ad-

vantage of the return of her husband to the city an appointing a meeting with herself at Cloud Cliffs o Monday evening, the 18th.

Hereward watched the face of the rector, as he read the letter, saw the old man's brow contract and his lips compress in pain and wrath.

When Mr. Cave had finished reading, he handed it back to Hereward in stern silence.

"What do you think now, Mr. Cave?" inquired the young man, as he returned the letter to its envelope and replaced it in his pocket.

"What do I think? That the unhappy child was the dupe of some deeply-dyed villain! And yet I believe her to have been a most innocent dupe! She has gone before her Heavenly Father and Judge now! She has no power to explain her conduct or defend herself to us!" said the rector, sternly and sorrowfully.

"Heaven knows," continued the young man, "that I never meant to drive her from her home; nor ever dreamed that she would go! Even in my blind rage I could not have turned the child out of doors on a bitter cold night. No, even then I had some vague idea of leaving her in peace here, until the rising of Congress should afford me leisure to attend to her case, and make a home and provision for her at some safe distance from the house that I believed she had—"

"No! Stop! Do not finish that sentence! The dead child may have been foolish; but she was innocent!"

To his surprise, Hereward, instead of contesting this point, suddenly caught the hand of his old friend and pressed it warmly, while he said:

"God bless you for saying that! It is very strange; but my thoughts of Lilith, my feelings towards her have all been revolutionized since I lost her! I look upon my past mood as simple madness; and despite all the stubborn facts of the letters and the meetings I believe the poor child to have been blameless!"

And then silence fell between the two men, and lasted until it was broken by the entrance of Dr. Kerr, who came in to announce that the coroner's inquest was over.

"And the verdict could have been no other than 'Accidental death,' of course," said Mr. Cave, while Tudor Hereward lifted his pale face inquiringly.

"No," solemnly replied the doctor, "the verdict was not 'Accidental death.'"

"What was it, then? I don't understand," said Mr. Cave.

"I will read the verdict to you. I would rather read it than tell it," sighed the doctor, as he unfolded a paper that he held in his hands and read aloud—slowly lingering upon the preliminary formula as if shrinking from the terrible words that came at last:

"That Lilith Hereward came to her death on the night of March 20th, by a blow on the head from some blunt, heavy weapon, held in the hand of some person unknown."

"Look to Tudor!" exclaimed Dr. Kerr, when he had finished reading; for the strong young man had fallen like a felled ox to the floor.

It was sunset before quiet was restored to Cloud Cliffs. Dr. Kerr and Mr. Cave watched alternately by the bedside of Tudor Hereward through the whole night.

In the morning Dr. Kerr announced his intention of telegraphing to Baltimore for an eminent specialist on brain and nerve diseases to come down and hold a consultation on the case of his patient, which he declared to be very critical.

Mr. Cave took charge of the arrangements for the funeral, which circumstances rendered necessary should be both speedy and quiet.

That afternoon Dr. Sloane arrived from Baltimore and remained overnight.

The next morning the symptoms of the patient were rather more favorable, and the Baltimore physician, having left careful directions for his treatment, returned to his own home.

In the course of that day the remains of the unfortunate girl were taken to the Church of St. Mark's at Frosthill, where they were met by a large number of the friends of the family.

Mr. Cave performed the funeral services, and during their course paid a touching tribute to the character of the martyred girl.

And finally, just as the sun went down, the coffin was lowered into the grave beside that of the elder Tudor Hereward in the family burial lot.

After this the friends dispersed to their homes.

Dr. Kerr, with a long following of weeping servants, returned to Cloud Cliffs to resume his faithful watch beside the bed of his young friend.

The story of Lilith Hereward's tragic death was taken up by all the newspapers; but as "mysterious murders" are too woefully common, it was read with but a passing thought or comment, everywhere except in the neighborhood of Frosthill and in Washington.

In both these places, where Lilith was known and loved so well, it caused a most painful sensation.

But all this had passed away, and the long session of Congress had come to an end before Tudor Hereward recovered.

[The sequel to this story is published in another volume, entitled, "Lilith," and is published in uniform style and price with this volume.]

THE END

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Who can read of the beginning of that sweet life, named Mara, which came into this world under the very shadow of the Death angel's wings, without having an intense desire to know how the premature bud blossomed? Again and again one lingers over the descriptions of the character of that baby boy Moses, who came through the tempest, amid the angry billows, pillowed on his dead mother's breast.

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By no means least among the charms of the story are the vivid word-pictures of the thrilling adventures, and the intense paintings of the beauties of nature, as seen in the almost unbroken forests.

It is the spirit of the frontier which is described, and one can by it, perhaps, the better understand why men, and women, too, willingly braved every privation and danger that the westward progress of the star of empire might be the more certain and rapid. A love story, simple and tender, runs through the book.

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The character of Captain Brooks, who voluntarily decides to sacrifice his own life in order to save the son of the Englishman, is not among the least of the attractions of this story, which holds the attention of the reader even to the last page. The tribal laws and folk lore of the different tribes of Indians known as the "Five Nations," with which the story is interspersed, shows that the author gave no small amount of study to the work in question, and nowhere else is it shown more plainly than by the skilful manner in which he has interwoven with his plot the "blood" law, which demands a life for a life, whether it be that of the murderer or one of his race.

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